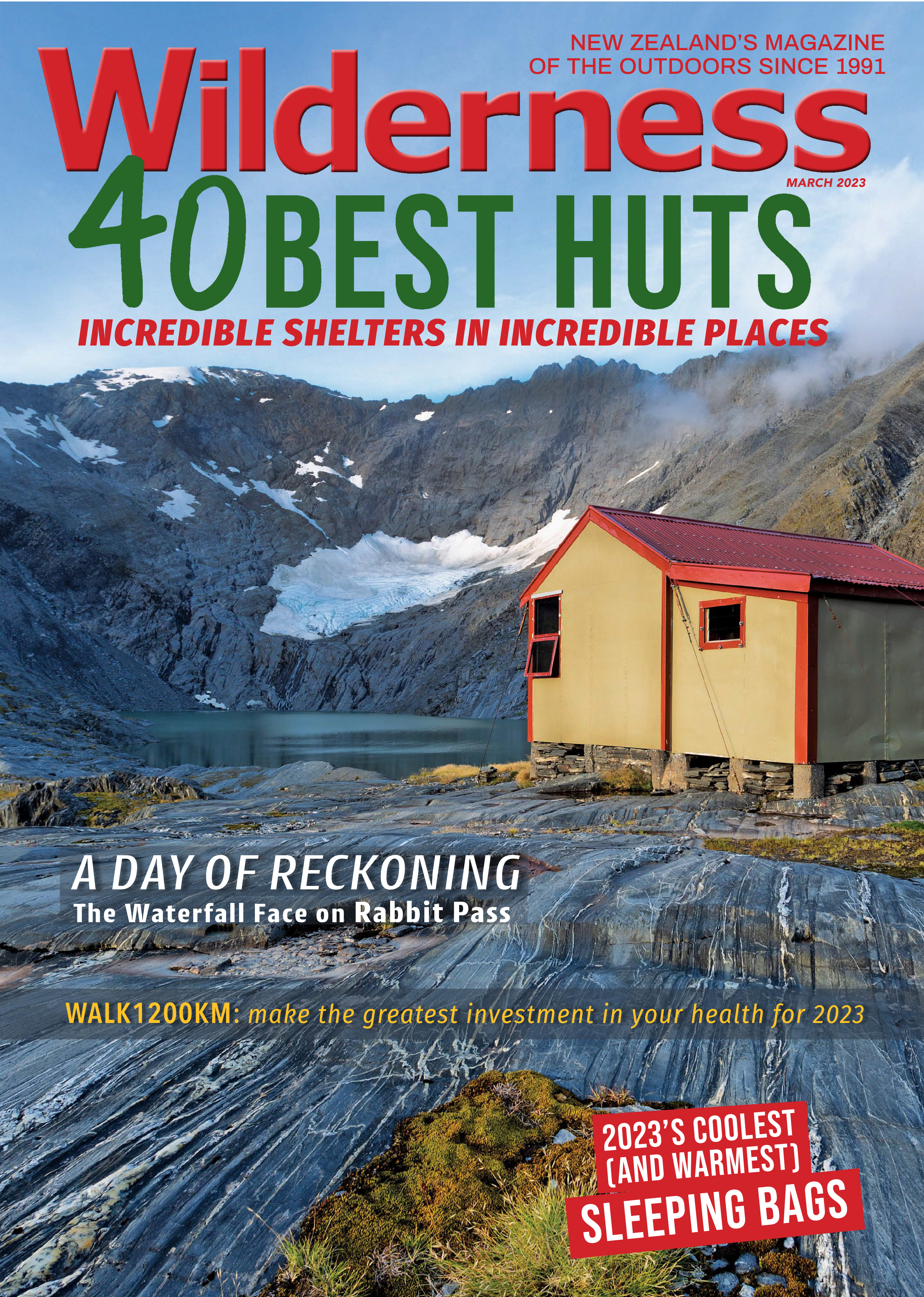
NEW ZEALAND'S MAGAZINE
OF THE OUTDOORS SINCE 1991

Wilderness

MARCH 2023



40 BEST HUTS

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A DAY OF RECKONING

The Waterfall Face on Rabbit Pass

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March 2023

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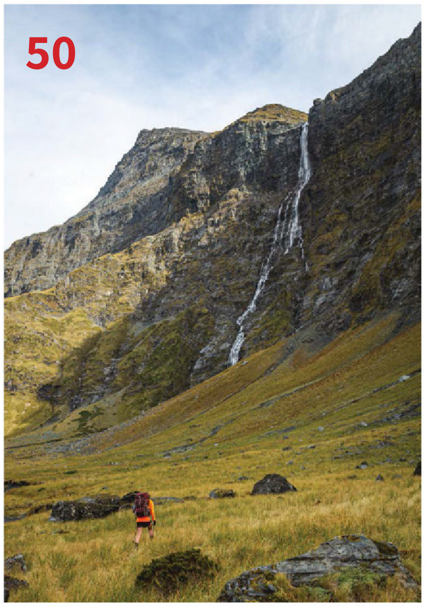

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THE NORTH FACE

THE BEST OF THE BEST

WE ARE SO FORTUNATE in New Zealand to have such an incredible hut network. There are more than 900 huts scattered around the country, smoothing so much outdoor adventure and offering a chance of escape into the wilderness, a place of reinvigoration, refreshment and nourishment for body and the soul.

I've travelled far and wide and have yet to encounter anything like the huts we have here. In the European alps you'll find often-glamorous refugios; Scotland has its basic bothies. But I've not been anywhere that can compete with the number, character and cultural significance of New Zealand's backcountry huts. We are indeed fortunate to have had such organisations as the Forest Service, Department of Conservation, individual tramping, alpine and hunting clubs, and, lately, the Back Country Trust – all have built huts and fostered, and ensured the continuity of an outdoors way of life here.

In May 2020, we published the Wilderness 100 – our pick of the 100 best trips in the country. This month, we turn our focus to huts and after much discussion between staff and contributors, we believe we have found the 40 'best' huts in the country. Of course, there are more than 900 'best' huts in New Zealand, so these 40 won't tickle everyone's fancy and you are entitled to your own opinion on which huts deserve to be shown in a feature such as this. If you think we've missed a hut or two, I'd love to know which should have been on our list – and, maybe, those that didn't deserve to be there.

Or perhaps you would like to share a memory or two of visiting the huts we've included. It would be an absolute pleasure to hear your memories of these places, for in sharing stories we acknowledge and strengthen the unique outdoor culture huts have given us.

- Alistair Hall
Editor

2022 NZ Post Editor of the Year - MPA Awards

E-newsletter
To get the latest in outdoor news, gear and the latest trip recommendations head to our website and sign up to the *Wilderness* Daily newsletter

EDITOR
Alistair Hall
alistair@lifestylepublishing.co.nz

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Kathy Ombler, Ricky French

GEAR EDITOR
Mark Watson

ROVING EDITOR
Shaun Barnett

COPY EDITORS
David Hall, Imogen Coxhead

WALKSHORTS AND WALK1200KM
Aaron van Delden

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Matthew Pike

ART AND DESIGN
Pelin Hall
pelin@lifestylepublishing.co.nz

COLUMNISTS
Pam Hutton, Rachel Davies,
Heather Grady, Izzie Thompson

CONTRIBUTORS
Mark Watson, Hazel Phillips,
Alistair Hughes, Pat Barrett,
Ray Salisbury, Sam Harrison,
Stephanie Ockhuysen,
Penny Webster, Amelia Nurse,
Rebekah Wilson

ADVERTISING SALES
Cherie Final
cherie@lifestylepublishing.co.nz

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Andrea Cowan
subscribe@lifestylepublishing.co.nz
Phone: 09 5702 658

PUBLISHERS
Alistair and Pelin Hall

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Letter of the month

GEAR REWARDS FOR WALK1200KM MILESTONES

My partner Roni introduced me to the Walk1200km challenge last year. We have since walked the Tongariro Northern Circuit (October 2022) and recently the Milford Track together (January 2023). We are doing it for pride – rainbow/queer visibility and mastery of physical/mental challenges on the track.

As a reward, we give ourselves hiking gear each month and at the end of completing the challenge. I am in my second year of Walk1200km and recently gifted myself an Aarn pack.

Walk1200km is such a great idea – thank you for getting us all out there more.

– Luca Fox

Luca can add a down-filled Marmot Highlander Hoody worth $449 from www.marmotnz.co.nz to her gear cupboard. Readers, send your letter to the editor for a chance to win.

IT'S EASY TO JUDGE

On a recent Tararua Ranges tramp, I met Ivan Elliott and his wife Sinéad at Tōtara Flats Hut. We chatted over dinner and then breakfast the following morning. Ivan knew the ranges well. Ivan and Sinead were well-equipped and having a good time.

I've since learned that Ivan died the day after we met, after setting off his PLB. The headline and opening paragraph of a news report suggested he might have made a fatal error ('Tramper died in "dangerous" range after carrying on journey without wife').

Only later in the article does it cite local police opinion that it was more likely a medical event than a misadventure.

My heart goes out to Sinéad, and to Ivan for what were probably some desperate final moments. It's so easy to judge, isn't it? I've done it myself – dissected the story of a tramping death and thought about what I'd do in that situation, imagining, of course, that I'd never make that same mistake.

The thing is, I had a bit of a close call myself on that trip, and on an 'easy' track. Some factors were outside my control but I did contribute an error of judgement. All I had to do to retrieve things was keep a calm head and talk myself through some steps. Lucky me. But I might not have been. Perhaps that's why I can't stop thinking about Ivan and Sinéad.

– Karen Vaughan

OUR TRIPS, YOUR WALK

At airports I always buy either a book or magazine, depending on how long the flight is. On a recent trip to Wellington, I discovered *Wilderness*. What a great magazine. I loved it so much that I ordered a subscription when I got home.

Heading away again this January, I packed both my December and January issues for the flight. I like to think I know New Zealand pretty well, but I was surprised to come across the article 'Mars on Earth' (January 2023) about the Clay Cliffs near Omarama. After a quick Google search I discovered that we would be driving right past them on our trip, so the stop was added to our itinerary. I can confirm they are definitely worth visiting. Thanks *Wilderness* for the inspiration.

– Irene Adderley

PULLING, CUTTING WILDING PINES

I usually go to places without tracks or huts, but in recent times I've been staying in huts.

The favourite topic of conversation in South Marlborough is wilding pines. I always ask, 'how many have you pulled'? Every time, a blank facial expression from the tramper. In the Branch Valley I would have pulled 200 seedlings from along the track. Recently, in Lake Alexander, I cut down all nine pines I encountered with a pruning saw.

If we all pulled a few as we go, and cut others, we will make a difference. My pruning saw is 175g, It's one of my essential items.

– Simon Wyatt

FILM FOR THOUGHT

I enjoyed the article 'In 35mm we trust' (February 2023) which discussed the benefits of tramping with a film camera. It provided food for thought and brought many evocative images of my own past trips to mind. I'm seriously considering digging out the old film camera for my next tramp.

– Ben Wilkins

PACKED PACK WEIGHT

When *Wilderness* arrives in the post, I turn straight to the 'What's in my pack' page as I am always looking for new ways of doing things.

What could help readers with this popular item would be for the pack owner featured to give the base weight of their packed pack. This would help all of us to work towards having as light a pack as possible.

While lightest is not always best, and people go into the hills for different purposes, I feel the lightest pack for the journey gives the safest and happiest trip.

– Bryan Dudley

MILFORD MEMORIES

The story 'The Dunedin rebels who saved the Milford Track' ('Five from the Archive' email, January 14), reminded me of an amazing family trip in 1963 on the Milford. I was studying at Otago University when our family walked the track. We went by boat to Glade House for the first night. Then it was up the Clinton River and through the beech forest to Six Mile Hut for a cuppa before proceeding up the Clinton Canyon to Pompolona Hut for the night. The bush was wet and the wekas' noisy!

Day two we tramped past Lake Mintaro and up through the ribbonwood forest to MacKinnon Pass. The wind was cold, the views amazing. Then down to the Arthur Valley. The track was stony and rough. Dad's boots fell apart and had to be held together with rope. The track led under the crags of Mt Elliott and the Jervois Glacier. Then into the bush, and a side trek to Sutherland Falls.

Day three was an easy walk from Quintin Hut down the valley past Giant Gate Falls to Arthur Hut. A launch met us at Sandfly Point for the trip to Milford. Each walker was given a certificate by THC to commemorate the walk.

– Karen Palmer

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Your trips, YOUR PIX

What did you get up to last weekend?

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Last Weekend submission criteria can be found at wildernessmag.co.nz.

Rosa Maclaurin and Pepi Lux got one last tramp in before school started. "They walked the steep hill to spend the night at Blue Range Hut in Tararua Forest Park," says Rosa's mum Susan.

Abel Tasman Coast Track
Skinner Point → 750m 15min
Goat Bay → 2km 60min
Waiharakeke → 4km 1hr 20min
Awaroa Hut & Camp → 6.7km 2hr 15min
Totaranui Camp Office ← 400m 5min
Anapai Bay ← 4.2km 1hr 30min
Whariwharangi Hut & Camp ← 10.2km 3hr 20min

Vicky Leach, Jack Leach and Pippa Melville made it to the end of the Abel Tasman Coast Track. "Jack still has the Gandalf stick he found on the first day," says mum Melanie.

Karyn Rastrick and her daughter Mila visited the Pinnacles in Coromandel Forest Park.

Bryan Adams took his daughter Bella on her first overnight camping trip. They headed to Mangatainoka Hot Springs campsite via the Te Puia Track in the Kāweka Range. "She loved the trip...but not the heavy pack," said Bryan.

Diane Winter took her niece Olivia Knight to Bushline Hut in Nelson Lakes National Park for the night.

Jackson Webber took his sons Theo and Frankie to Great Barrier Island where they walked the Aotea Track. "They would have appreciated a few less stairs," said Jackson.

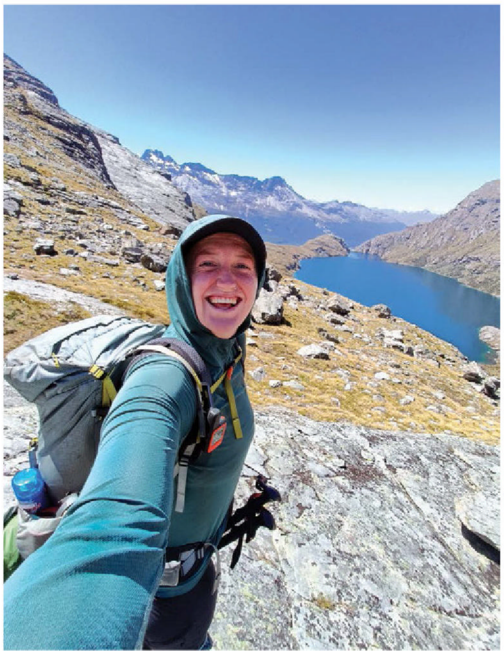
Greta Hoben and Briana Sullivan had lots of energy to spare on the Queen Charlotte Track.

Jasper Hughes walked to Pinchgut Hut in Canterbury with family and friends. "They had a wonderful time swimming in the waterhole on the way up," says mum Pryderi.

Kylie Gilbert took her two boys, Rickon and Johnan, on an overnighter to Rangiwahia Hut in Ruahine Forest Park. "We managed to sneak in before the foul weather hit," said Kylie.

Aroha Hyland took Addie Miller and Maddy Hyland to Fern Burn Hut. "You can see the hut in the background," says Aroha.

Swimming the south's 344 LAKES



Liana Smith at Lake Unknown – one of 344 South Island lakes

A community of more than 200 South Island swimmers are hoping to float and freestyle their way across every lake in the South Island.

The Southern Lakes Swimming Club (SLSC) believes the 'dream' to swim in all of the South Island's 344 named lakes to be 'near impossible'. But it has set the challenge for its club members.

Otago's Liana Smith is participating and will combine it with her passion for hiking to reach the more remote lakes on the list. Recently she plunged into Lake Unknown in Mt Aspiring National Park, which she reached after three days of solo climbing and scree-slope navigating. She's no stranger to tough physical challenges. Last year she completed the 'triple crown' of New Zealand swims – Lake Taupo (40.2km), Cook Strait (22km) and Foveaux Strait (28km). Only seven other people have done this.

What prompted you to swim all these lakes?

While I'm an avid tramper, I'm a swimmer at heart. The SLSC established the Lake Attack Aotearoa Challenge 2023, encouraging people to get into any of the 344 South Island lakes before winter – safely and within their limits, of course. The challenge is my ultimate collaboration. They're aiming to promote anyone and everyone to simply get out in whatever lake they can, and just enjoy it how they wish for a minimum of 10 minutes. Swimming, dipping or even just floating, all count.

Has there been a highlight swim so far?

Lake Unknown has been on my adventures list for a fair while now and the stars aligned to tick it off. Hopefully I'll head down to Fiordland soon and into the hills for more epic swims.

How many people are getting involved?

There are a couple of hundred followers on the 'Lake Attack' Facebook page where folk have been recording some of their swims to keep each other inspired. Hopefully, as the weather keeps warming up, more folk will get out there and enjoy some beautiful lakes in their backyards.

EIGHT MORE HUTS RAZED IN TE UREWERA

More DOC huts have been burned down in Te Urewera following a High Court injunction that halted hut removals. Te Uru Taumatua, the operating arm of iwi Ngāi Tūhoe, had dismantled 29 of the park's 48 huts before a court injunction last November prevented further removals. Late last year eight more huts were burned and police are still investigating their circumstances.

Conservationist and former manager of Te Urewera Mainland Island project Peter Shaw said Otamatunu Hut was one of the eight destroyed. It was a bio-diversity focused hut with no public access. "It was the core to the Mainland Island project, that's where it all started in Te Urewera. Now a two-storey hut is gone, including everything in it – the traps, the storage shed, the wood burning stove. The value to replace it would be in excess of $300,000." Pakoakoa Hut was also burned. "That one is really tucked away. Not many in the general public would know it existed," Shaw said.

No date has been set yet by the Rotorua High Court for a hearing on the issues in Te Urewera. Tramping in Te Urewera remained open, with backcountry visitors advised to provide their own shelter at all hut sites.

Nicholas Jones with his safer, lighter F-Bomb trap

NEW PEST TRAP design the 'F-bomb'

A Taranaki industrial designer has created a lightweight pest trap designed to keep mustelids, rats and hedgehogs under control. Dubbed 'The F-Bomb', Nicholas Jones and his company Rewild are confident their design could become the go-to trap across the country for predator control.

"I helped a friend who did a bit of trapping work on Taranaki Maunga and the devices they were using were wooden boxes with a trap inside. The thing that really struck me was their difficulty to use, and the lack of any features to ensure the user could not be harmed while using the traps," said Jones.

The designer's new trap is predominantly plastic and less than half the weight of a DOC250 trap. Setting them requires pulling back the cover, adding bait and re-closing the lid. The spring-loaded trap can't be activated when the lid is open, making it safe to use, Jones said.

Already the traps have been deployed by the East Taranaki Environment Collective in Purangi Forest and at Everett Park, Pātea.

SEND devices (left) and PLB's are different though both do offer an SOS functions

BEACONS VS SENDS

New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) is concerned that a range of SEND devices (satellite messengers with an SOS function), will be assumed by users to be the same as a PLB (a personal locator beacon). However, SENDs aren't subject to the same legalisation or standardisation as are PLBs.

"It's one of the main misconceptions we're trying to solve as a sector," said Tania Seward, NZSAR senior advisor. "When people work out they want a PLB – which is fantastic – often they post on Facebook and people will recommend them a SEND. The issue is that it's a satellite device and not a PLB."

PLB's have a built-in location device; a helicopter will still be able to locate a hiker even if they move due to a situation like a rising river. "They're fantastic if you're in trouble and need to get a message out quickly. You can't specify if it's a broken leg or a heart attack like you can with a SEND, but the benefit is their accuracy."

SEND systems rely on GPS coordinates sent at the time of activation and Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand isn't the registering agent for these devices.

"I think a key message is if you're going to buy a PLB, make sure it's a New Zealand-coded beacon. That's one that has been set up for use here and its registration details are in New Zealand, which you can check online," says Seward.

Roughly one in three land-based rescues follow beacon activation, compared to five years ago, where it was one in six.

NEWSLETTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR OPPORTUNITY

***Wilderness* is** looking for a freelance part-time newsletter and social media editor to begin in early March.

It's a remote work opportunity that can be done anywhere there's an internet connection. It is up to eight hours a week and involves writing *Wilderness's daily*, weekly and monthly newsletters, sharing content on its social media channels as well as finding ways to be more engaging on social media to grow the magazine's audience and presence.

It requires a clever wordsmith who also has a genuine interest in the subject matter – tramping in New Zealand.

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YOUNG TRAMPERS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS WHILE HIKING **TE ARAROA**

It was a memorable birthday for not one but all three of Kristina and Nat Anglem's kids, who celebrated while walking Te Araroa Trail.

Kiki (14), Tawhai (12) and Aria (9) hiked the 1306km South Island section of Te Araroa this summer, tackling mountain ridge lines, roads and river crossings.

A hiking mission of epic proportions had been a dream of Kristina's, a world champion adventure racer who competed in the Length of New Zealand Race in 2001

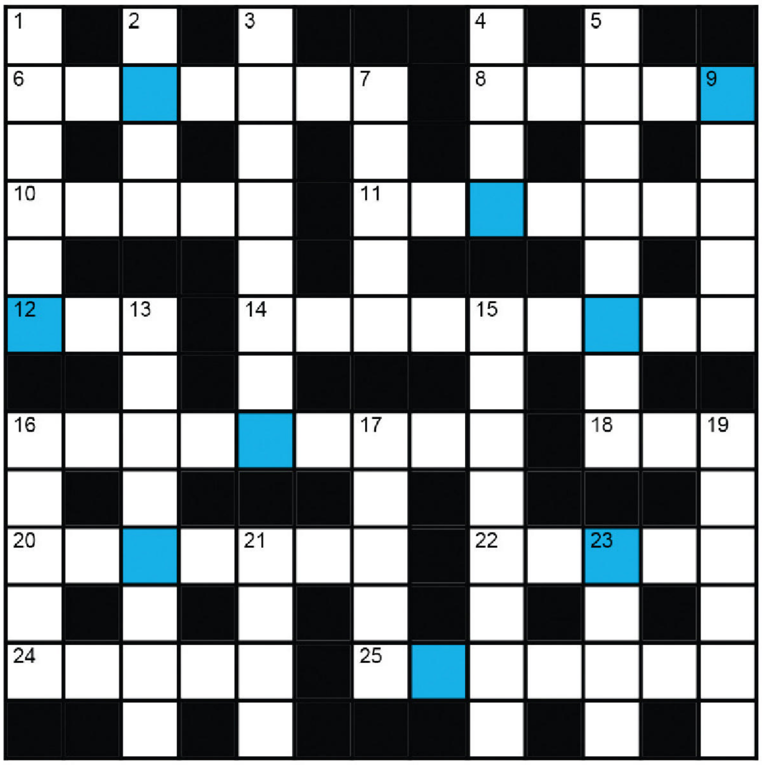
"It's a passion I've always had, and I'm lucky our family shared my enthusiasm for this adventure," she said. "Our longest tramp prior to this was about four days on the Milford Track, so while Te Araroa was a real step up, the kids have always been very happy in the outdoors."

The Anglem kids Kiki, Tawhai and Aria (with dad Nat) all celebrated their birthday while tramping Te Araroa

Aria's birthday was celebrated in Nelson, Tawhai's at a St Arnaud bach on Lake Rotoroa, where the kids baked a cake with family members. Kiki wanted to have his birthday in Arrowtown after the family completed the Queenstown section of Te Araroa.

"The kids were so adaptable and bold," Kristina said. "I remember a section between Mid Wairoa and Top Wairoa Hut in the Richmond Ranges. It was a pretty steep edge, so I put a rope across. Of course, none of them used it."

While hiking, the Anglems raised money for a trapping programme in Dusky Sound managed by the charter vessel Pure Salt. Over $1900 has gone towards funding a new trapline in the area.



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Across

6. _____ Loop Trail – mountain bike trail near Queenstown (7)
8. Temperature of glacial lake is not this! (5)
10. Robert _____ Route – popular tramp in Nelson Lakes National Park (5)
11. NZ river in Marlborough that flows into Clarence River (7)
12. ___ Pass Hut – resting point on St James Walkway in Lewis Pass area (3)
14. Large flat frozen expanses in polar regions (3,6)
16. Spork is a handy one! (9)
18. Droop like loose tent ropes, eg (3)
20. Bag hung on side of rear wheel of bike (7)
22. Smouldering remnant of campfire (5)
24. Delicious flavour sensation of food at end of long day's tramp (5)
25. _____ Head in Otago – where to see albatross colony (7)

Down

1. Rough cindery fragments of solidified lava (6)
2. This describes landscape without sufficient rainfall (4)
3. Dark fine-grained volcanic rock found in parts of NZ (8)
4. What sandfly bites do! (4)
5. Glistens like river in bright summer sun (8)
7. Leave no _____ – do not destroy or pollute environment (5)
9. Deep narrow wooded valleys of streams (5)
13. Expert mountain climber (8)
15. Fearless in face of wilderness challenge (8)
16. Suggestion during discussion about proposed tramp, eg (5)
17. Eastern great _____ – NZ bird also known as kōtuku (5)
19. _____ wasp – introduced pest with harmful effect on NZ environment (6)
21. ____ up – becomes frozen on surface in cold weather (4)
23. Scottish word for small stream (4)

WILDERNESS **WORD**

Complete the crossword and rearrange the letters in the blue squares to spell out the hidden solution. Send your answer, name and address, by March 19, to: wildernessword@lifestylepublishing.co.nz. All correct entries go in the draw to win one of three annual (six-issue) subscriptions to NZ's leading lifestyle magazine, NZ Life & Leisure, each worth $63.

NZ Life & Leisure
Sunlit spaces

Hidden solution: Part of mountain bike (9) **February's hidden solution:** Lake Brunner

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* Multiple images may be submitted, but you should only include one image per email entry.

* Don't send dozens of variations of the same shot – choose your favourite.

* The best photos tell a story – human or animal elements can bring personality, colour and excitement to an image.

* Dare to be different. Every year we get dozens of images of kea, the Kepler Track, Mueller Hut and Aoraki / Mt Cook. Find unique places and subjects, or frame classic vistas in new ways.

* We use dozens of entries to illustrate stories in future issues of the magazine (which we pay for). This means the best photos reflect the content of the magazine and should be taken in the great outdoors – not your garden. (House cats and lupins are out; huts, trampers, rock wrens and mountains are in.)

LAST MONTH TO ENTER!

Sponsored by Panasonic Lumix

THE THREE CATEGORIES

Out there

For the wilderness photos that make you go ‘wow’. Whether taken from a mountain top or deep in the bush, it should be a view to savour, a dramatic scene. The best photos will feature people in the landscape – trampers, climbers, kayakers, bikers – anyone enjoying New Zealand’s wilderness.

Huts and camping

Celebrate the uniqueness of New Zealand hut life and locations, or share the perfect camping scene. Once again, people will make the image complete.

Wildlife

Whether it’s birds, insects, plants, trees or a lone deer or chamois captured in the mountains, send us your best shots of NZ’s flora and fauna.

The prizes

Overall winner: →

The winning photographer receives a 20MP Lumix DC-G90M camera with a 12-60mm lens worth $1699. It’s a weather-sealed camera and is the ideal tool for those wanting great images without the need to carry heavy camera gear.

Runner-up: →

The runner-up will receive a Lumix DC-TZ220D camera valued at $1199. This pocket-sized travel camera has a 15x zoom LEICA lens. It has a 3-inch touch screen on the back and an electronic viewfinder.

Third prize: →

The third place-getter will receive a Lumix DC-TZ95D camera worth $799. It has 30x zoom, 24mm wide angle lens, flip up LCD screen and electronic viewfinder.

HOW TO ENTER

Email entries to photocomp@lifestylepublishing.co.nz. Include the category you’re entering in the subject line.

In the body of the email, include the category, your name, address and, crucially, a caption that describes the photo and includes the location.

Find full entry details, including image and caption requirements and competition terms and conditions at www.wildernessmag.co.nz – keyword search ‘2023 Wilderness photo competition’.

TE ARAROA TRAIL
Wilderness
SPECIAL FEATURE
2022 OUTDOOR PHOTO OF THE YEAR!
6 MAPPED TRIPS
LAKE MORGAN HUT
THE YEAR'S BEST RAIN JACKETS and SLEEPING MATS

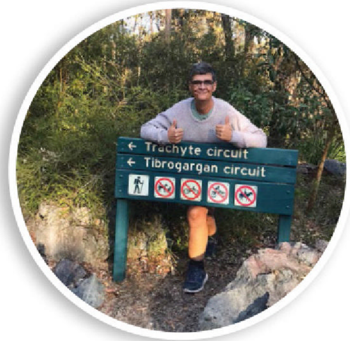
Tim Preston Marshall’s photo of a rifleman eating a bug won him the title of 2022 Wilderness Outdoor Photographer of the Year.

His image also graced the cover of the April issue. Can you repeat his success?

I’m doing it!

Three Walk1200km participants share their reasons and experiences.

BY AMELIA NURSE



I’m doing it to keep up with my grandkids

Sue Lovatt is walking every day for herself and to keep up with her grandkids.

“Sounds like a murder sometimes,” Sue Lovett says of the cries coming from kiwi she occasionally encounters on her walks around and beyond Oban on Rakiura.

She has a natural inclination for remote locales; she and her husband spent some of a pre-covid dream holiday exploring places like Vladivostok and Blagoveshchensk in Russia, and -20 degree ice roads and frozen lakes in Siberia. Tourism is not developed there and they found the people “authentic.”

Sue, a grandmother of three, has noticed her fitness levels, earned over 20 years farming in Canterbury, are “not coming the way they used to.”

Just getting her one-year-old grandson dressed for a walk is like “wrestling with an eel, every limb in a different direction” and she feels it’s now time to not only keep up with herself, but with her grandkids.

Losing a few kilograms is another motivator for joining Walk1200km, she wants to be “a reasonable, comfortable weight… I know what feels good for me.”

She loves taking pictures to encourage others to walk daily (as she is) and to visit Rakiura Stewart Island.

“People have a wacky perception of what it’s like; they think it’s cold. It’s not.”

I’m doing it to stay off the couch

Steve McCarthy lost an epic amount of weight and now has his sights set on Everest Base Camp.

Paramedic Steve McCarthy – who was heavy for his 1.82m stature – initially started walking to raise money for the White Matter Brain Cancer Trust after he lost his Dad to the disease.

The charity’s support motivated him to try to give something back. Walking for the $7500 he ultimately achieved was the ‘something’ that kept him going: “I felt accountable for any and every dollar people could give. During Covid it was extraordinary.”

On the way though, two unexpected things happened: he lost more weight than he anticipated and he fell in love with nature and got hooked on tramping.

“It’s absolutely incredible what’s out there,” he says. “The wilderness is spectacular.”

An achievement-laden trip around Mt Ruapehu with workmates was a turning point; Steve had already lost 40kg and thought, ‘I never want to stay on that couch again!’

“To lose that ‘tire’ from around your waist is incredible,” he says. “You’re walking further in the same time and enjoying it more.”

Steve walks every day and over a year travelled 3010km, and dropped from 150kg to 94kg.

And the height of his 2023 aspirations are inversely proportional to his weight loss journey. His next destination? Everest Base Camp.

I’m doing it to deal with my grief

Shirley Keen finds walking gives her some control over her life.

Walking 500m was all Shirley Keen could manage a couple of years ago. She realised, with the progression of her arthritis and her weight, “if I didn’t do something about it I literally wouldn’t be able to walk.”

A bit at a time, she increased her steps and when *Wilderness* spoke with her, she’d lost 25kg and not missed a day walking in 405 consecutive days; over a year of 5AM starts and 5km every morning before work.

But it gets harder than that. Last year Shirley’s husband was diagnosed with cancer and a few months later she lost her son in an accident.

“I think that walking got me through,” she says, “it’s something you can have control over.”

Photography is also a motivator and a moderator – she participates in challenges, like a letter of the alphabet each day: “J and Q are not easy!” And rather than taking a break, she takes a picture, “a rest without taking a rest.”

The distraction of focussing on what she can do gets her through the difficult patches.

Now 138km into the Walk1200km challenge, Shirley says she appreciates the community: “Walking is part of my life now. It’s good to make a commitment to do this with other people.”

MEALS THAT HELP YOU ENJOY THE OUTDOORS MORE

Fresh food may be nutritionally best but it's not always the lightest or easiest to carry. That's where Back Country Cuisine comes in.

The name says it all, Back Country Cuisine is food for the backcountry. Its home is in Invercargill, one of the southernmost cities in the world, set amongst a region that is a gourmet food box. Here is access to some of the best backcountry anywhere with Rakiura/Stewart Island, Fiordland and Mt Aspiring National Parks providing the perfect testing grounds for Back Country Cuisine meals.

The company's mission is to help improve people's mental and physical wellbeing by reducing barriers to enjoyment and participation in the outdoors. With its freeze-dried meals, the company claims it can help do this in four ways:

1. Reducing the preparation time and level of knowledge required to be properly fed in the outdoors.
2. Reducing the amount of gear needed to cook food in the outdoors.
3. Reducing pack weight thereby improving people's physical performance in the outdoors.
4. Reducing the stress involved in selecting good food to eat while tramping.

Back Country Cuisine acknowledges that 'fresh is best' from a nutritional perspective. But, in an outdoors setting, that has to be balanced against the reality of carrying weight: fresh food is heavy.

This is where Back Country Cuisine's light, fast, tasty and nourishing freeze-dried food comes into its own. The company says its people love seeing the smiles, adventures and goals achieved by outdoors people, that its meals fuel.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BACK COUNTRY CUISINE AT WWW.BACKCOUNTRYCUISINE.CO.NZ.

March #microchallenges

Each month we set three new #microchallenges to add interest and silliness to your kilometres.

These three fun #microchallenges will encourage you to better appreciate your surroundings. Our favourite nine #microchallenge completers receive a Walk1200km badge. The best entry of each challenge receives a prize from our partners.

#microchallenge16: Visit a place made famous in a movie or TV show

This one is location, location, location! Can you visit Mordor or Karekare Beach where The Piano was filmed. We want some Walk1200km action at famous movie locations. Take a photo of you at the location. Don't forget to tell us where it is and which film or show it's from.

#microchallenge16

Partner prize:
A pair of Bridgedale Midweight Merino Performance Fit socks.

Bridgedale

#microchallenge17: Visit a hut

To keep with the hut theme of the March issue, can you find your own amazing backcountry hut to visit? Your photo should include yourself or your companions and don't forget to tell us the hut's name and location. Thanks to Walk1200km participant Jenny Weston for this idea.

#microchallenge17

Partner prize:
Salewa Crow GTX boots worth $530!

#microchallenge18: Have a brew with a view

Microchallenges are about taking the time to appreciate your surroundings and what better way to do that than by taking a break and enjoying a mug of your favourite hot (or cold) beverage. Perhaps you'll boil the billy or pull out a Thermos. Your photo should include you admiring the surroundings. Thanks to Ali Middleton for suggesting this one.

#microchallenge18

Partner prize:
a $100 Back Country Cuisine voucher

GIFT
VOUCHER
BACK
COUNTRY CUISINE
$100
RTHERFASTER

HOW TO ENTER

Take a photo of you completing the challenge and share it on the Walk1200km Facebook group or on Instagram, with a descriptive caption and using the relevant hashtag – e.g #microchallenge17 – by March 15 (those without social media can email entries to walk1200km@lifestylepublishing.co.nz with the relevant hashtag in the subject line). Winners will be published in the May 2023 issue of Wilderness. Got an idea for a challenge? Email walk1200km@lifestylepublishing.co.nz.

#microchallenge 10-12 winners!

Want to win gear and vouchers from Walk1200km partners? Complete the #microchallenges as these Walk1200km participants have done and receive a Walk1200km badge. The best efforts receive a special prize from our partners!

GIFT VOUCHER
$100
FURTHER FASTER
Wilderness WALK 1200km

#microchallenge10:
Share Walk1200km with a friend

FURTHER FASTER $100 VOUCHER

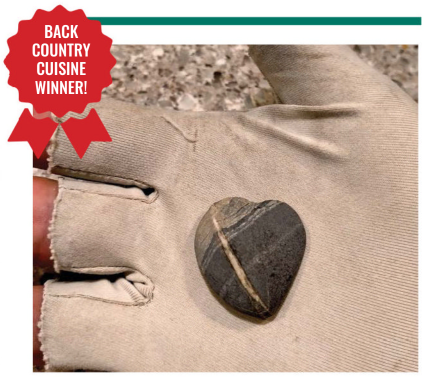
Conall Maskey introduced his wife to the Walk1200km challenge on a Christmas Day mission to Angelus Hut.

Luca Tiger introduced her friends Tammie and Toby to the challenge as they walked the Gillespie Pass Circuit.

Danielle Brown roped in her mum and now both are doing the Walk1200km challenge

BACK COUNTRY
Berry Smoothie
Wilderness WALK 1200km

#microchallenge11:
Find an unusual stone


BACK COUNTRY CUISINE WINNER!

Janet Goodman found this 'heart of stone' in the Maruia River.

Katie Durkmead found some stones in the Marlborough Sounds. "There's so much difference and variation that you can find from just one stream."

Kristina Moore found plenty of stones on the Gillespie Lagoon Track near Fox Glacier. The stone track 'carried on for about 2km until the track hit the stones on the beach'.

FENIX
Wilderness WALK 1200km

#microchallenge12:
Pick some flowers

FENIX HM70R HEADLAMP SUPPLIED BY SAFETY PARTNER PLAN MY WALK

While walking up the Young Valley with three of his sons, Duane Ashman found some flowers for his wife Sarah who was back in Makarora looking after fourth son Zach who had broken his leg.

Bridget Bruorton and her daughter Sasha picked a handful of colours on a track above Lyttleton on the Port Hills.

Valerie Coulter added her own twist to the #microchallenge by making a bouquet out of driftwood, feathers and other dried vegetation.

Seen that you've won?

To claim your prize, email your address and a photo of yourself holding this issue of Wilderness to: walk1200km@lifestylepublishing.co.nz.

LEAVE NO TRACE, GO ‘PLAMPING’

Enthusiastic tramper Hazel Phillips has ‘wheelie bin’ out there lately.

BY HAZEL PHILLIPS

Tramping’ as a term is beginning to decline in popularity, with the English-originated word ‘hiking’ taking over. It’s true, I read it on the news. The Mountain Safety Council has come to this conclusion after studying Google searches from within New Zealand over the past five years. (I can’t see a safety connection with this research, but that’s a column for another day.)

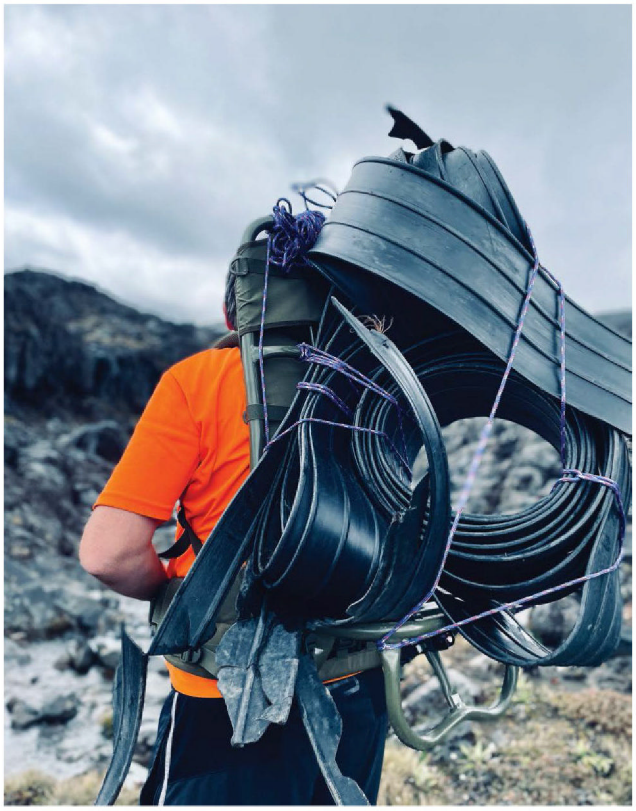
I usually self-censor when talking to foreigners and opt to use ‘hiking’ lest people think this ‘tramping’ activity I engage in involves a lack of personal hygiene. Recently, speaking to an American, I forgot and said tramping. She did a noticeable double-take and asked if it was similar to ‘plogging’. Then I did a double-take.

Plogging is a combination of running and picking up rubbish. The term comes from that bastion of healthy living, Sweden, where they say ‘plocka upp’ (meaning ‘pick up’), combined with ‘jogging’. The resulting term ‘plogging’ sounds like a criminal charge you’d hear in court, perhaps involving public toilets.

But I digress.

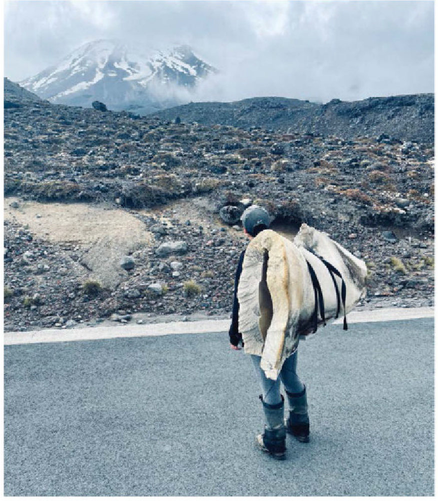
I haven’t been plogging, because jogging is activity enough for me to cope with at any one time, but I realised I’m a keen plamper. And here I’m inventing the term and officially claiming credit for it; ‘plamper’ being a portmanteau of ‘tramper’ and ‘plocka upp’. I plamp, you plamp, he/she/they/it plamps. We all plamp, we go off on a plamp together. (I could stretch further and invent ‘plountaineering’, but that activity sounds unlikely.)

I’ve been picking up rubbish on Mt Ruapehu lately, which is my backyard. It started when I went in search of a series of swimming holes near Turoa and found the catchment littered with pieces of plastic, Woodstock cans, pole baskets, beanies, chip packets and those little gifts from Satan himself; takeaway coffee cup lids. I grumped (plamped) up and down the catchment until my 65l pack was full to bursting, then sat in a swimming hole that overlooks a waterfall in a sort of natural ‘infinity pool’ arrangement, and contemplated the environment.



Plamping out snow fencing collected from stream beds on Ruapehu

I WENT UP THE OTHER DAY FOR A SWIM AND TOOK THREE RUBBISH BAGS ‘JUST IN CASE’. THEY CAME AWAY FULL, AND THERE WAS YET MORE TO COLLECT.



Hazel plamps by lugging out foam from the streams near the base of Turoa

I hate the idea of this rubbish flowing into such a pristine environment. Ruapehu is not just in a national park but a World Heritage area. It touches two gazetted wilderness areas. To quote Churchill, this was something ‘up with which I will not put’.

Mangawhero Stream is home to many stunning swimming holes and in its lower reaches, the Tutara/Serpentine Stream, it supplies water to Ohakune.

I plamped and plamped like a mad wee plamper. Others from Ohakune were plamping, too, and I began to see the effects of our efforts; each outing I noticed the streams were cleaner.

I posted some plamping content to my Instagram and my DMs overflowed with angry messages. People raged at Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL), the operator of the ski fields. That’s not really the point, I feel. RAL is in voluntary administration right now and hence has more on its plate to worry about. Moreover, as a snow user I reckon the onus is on us as individuals to do our bit regardless of any ski field initiative. Put your plamping boots where it counts.

Eventually, DOC, Project Tongariro and RAL organised a community clean-up, similar to what’s been done in previous years. I couldn’t go, but I’m stoked they did it. I’ll be back again soon, plamping away up and down my favourite water holes.

I went up the other day for a swim and took three rubbish bags ‘just in case’. They came away full, and there was yet more to collect. Tucked into the sand alongside the stream, my plamping buddy noticed a piece of trash to grab. I leaned over and the purple hue of plastic caught my eye. “It’s fifty bucks,” I laughed.

Sometimes when you love the mountain, the mountain loves you back.

Kohaihai River Bridge
Max. Load 5 Person
Kohaiha

WWW.WILDERNESSMAG.CO.NZ/WALK1200KM

WALK1200KM in 2023

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FIONA BERSANI, HOLLYFORD WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

Bard Crawford has been guiding Kiwi trampers on the Hollyford Track this summer

The Bard on THE HOLLYFORD

More Kiwi trampers are going on guided trips and more are interested in helping conservation. *Wilderness* asked guide and ardent conservationist Bard Crawford what it's like to guide locals in their own backyard.

BY KATHY OMBLER

WHEN I FIRST MET BARD CRAWFORD, on Ngāi Tahu Tourism's Hollyford Wilderness Experience, I didn't think I needed him. After a lifetime of tramping throughout New Zealand, here was this guy telling me all about what I was tramping through. Just let me walk, I grumbled to myself.

He soon snapped me out of that. And, with his stories, his respect for the mana whenua, his knowledge and entertaining energy, I learned heaps.

Bard's now in his 23rd season (14 of them consecutive) as a Ngai Tahu Tourism guide. He's also hosted clients throughout New Zealand for National Geographic Expeditions and, post Covid, is rebuilding his own private guiding business.

This summer, despite the open borders, he says it's mostly Kiwis who have booked into the Hollyford guided walks.

"The good side of guiding Kiwi groups is you don't have to explain so much," Crawford says. "Most will know the main trees and birds, so you can just delve straight into higher-level interpretation. It's also about responding to who is in your group.

"Last year I guided some botanists and ecologists. They knew all the taxonomic names so I had to lift my game to that level of botanical science."

Crawford, a Pākehā with a huge interest in te ao Māori, enjoys the 'challenge' of getting Pākehā New Zealanders interested in Māori life and culture. He says, it adds so much depth, and there's a subtle way of achieving it without sounding like preaching.

"It's not just reciting the Māori name for a river or mountain or plant," he says. "It's about engaging people – smell this, taste this – or telling the story behind the name. I always talk about mahinga kai, medicinal or edible plants and fungi, and sometimes make mānuka or bush lawyer tea, or I'll cut a blade of flax and strip it for weaving. If it's done the right way it's useful, practical learning, also it's tikanga. By the end of their trip, when people start asking questions like how did the iwi store kererū for 12 months, then you know you've made an impact."

He does wish Kiwi walkers were more open and honest. “It can be easier to work with North American people,” he says. “They are straight up, they tell you how they feel so you don’t have to guess. We struggle in our Kiwi culture to do this; we won’t complain. We’ll ask our Kiwi guests, how is it going and they’ll say fine, even if they are having a problem that we could be solving.”

In recognition of his skills, Crawford has set guiding standards for Ngāi Tahu Tourism ventures around the country. It’s made him think hard about what makes a good guide.

“For me, it’s instinctive and your heart’s got to be in it,” he says. “I’ve realised that when, for whatever reason, it hasn’t been a good trip, I feel like I’ve been to work.

“It’s also personality, it’s training and it’s genuine passion and connection, not just giving a bus commentary. I’m passionate about Māori history and conservation so those things will come genuinely from me.

> “I’M PASSIONATE ABOUT MĀORI HISTORY AND CONSERVATION SO THOSE THINGS WILL COME GENUINELY FROM ME.”

“I was once invited to guide for National Geographic Expeditions in Alaska. It would have been a dream job but I just couldn’t do it justice. I’m a Kiwi and connection is needed to the place where you’re guiding to pull it off.”

Sometimes, it’s just delivering down-to-earth stuff, or the unexpected. “We might grab a beer and sit on the beach at sunset, find a paua, shuck it then sashimi it, or make a bag out of bull kelp and show how you could carry the paua for several days.”

It’s conservation that really gets Crawford excited. He is a trustee and active advocate for the Hollyford Conservation Trust, a massive restoration project around the lower Hollyford. When Covid hit he found his happy place with Jobs for Nature conservation projects, camping in remote Fiordland, knee-deep in swamps or pushing through tangled rain forest, opening up new traplines and extending the trust’s reach into the next valley. He walks the talk.

The Hollyford guided walk takes guests into the heart of the restoration area and Ngāi Tahu Tourism has become a trust partner. Crawford and his fellow guides tell their guests about the project and how bird numbers have rebounded. They see the traps and they hear the incredible dawn chorus that now resounds at Martins Bay.

“People want to be part of this now. They are so much more environmentally conscious and it’s no longer about just planting a tree. They want to see conservation in action and put something back.”

And put back they do. Crawford’s enthusiasm is infectious and invariably, on the last night at Martins Bay Lodge, donations come flowing in for the trust.

It’s a win-win, the guide and the guests learning about and working together for the cause. For Bard Crawford, it’s the world as it should be.

SIMPLY GOOD for the SOUL
Te Araroa NEW ZEALAND'S TRAIL
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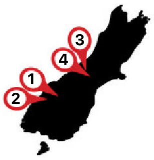
SEE MORE... POLAR EXPLORERS

Several features in the Southern Alps are named after polar explorers. These four make admirable destinations for trans-alpine trampers.



BY SHAUN BARNETT →

ERNEST SHACKLETON'S escape from Antarctica after his ship, *Endurance*, was crushed and sunk is arguably the greatest survival story of all time. One of my summer reads was a recent biography of the famous Anglo-Irish Antarctic explorer by Ranulph Fiennes.

Shackleton tried three times to reach the South Pole during the so-called 'heroic age' of polar exploration. Although he failed every time, he is revered for his ability to survive, his superb leadership, and the fact he never lost a man under his direct control. Perhaps the only polar survival story to match Shackleton's is that of Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen.

Nansen was a pioneer of polar exploration. He made his own portable multi-fuel stove which, crucially, enabled long-distance travel over ice expanses devoid of wood for fuel. Another Nansen innovation was his understanding of what motivated men to endure long polar journeys. During the 1880s, one of the great polar prizes was the first crossing of Greenland. Every previous expedition had set out from the settled parts of Greenland, but all had failed about halfway over the icecap, and retreated. Nansen reasoned that by starting on the opposite, uninhabited side of Greenland, all his team's motivation would be to actually keep going, as only by crossing the icecap could they reach the haven of civilisation. Genius! In 1888, he succeeded with a lightweight team of six who completed the 420km traverse in 49 days.

Afterwards, Nansen turned his attention to the North Pole, and again proved his originality and daring on a four-year expedition of 1893-96. He designed a specially strengthened ship, the *Fram*, aiming to deliberately become frozen in the northern polar sea ice, and then drift towards the pole on the ocean currents. After nearly two years of frozen drifting, Nansen and his companion Hjalmar Johansen set off from the *Fram*, headed across the sea ice pole-wards, with dogs hauling supplies and light kayaks on sleds. Although the Norwegian pair failed to make the pole, they set a new record for reaching the furthest north (86°13.6'N) and survived

Johansen Peak (on right above Seal Col) on the Barrier Range in Mt Aspiring National Park

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

for 15 months on the ice, an incredible feat of endurance in such extremes. Eventually, they reached Franz Josef Land in their kayaks. Remarkably, they were rescued there, completely by chance, by English explorer Frederick Jackson, who had been inspired to start his own expedition only after hearing a Nansen lecture in Britain.

Fittingly enough, several features in Kā Tiritiri o te Moana / the Southern Alps are named after polar explorers, including Shackleton and Nansen. Some of them make admirable destinations for suitably experienced trans-alpine trampers, including these detailed here.

1

MT AMUNDSEN

Mt Aspiring National Park

Along with Nansen, Amundsen is the most famous of Norwegian polar explorers. Amundsen made his name by becoming the first to navigate the infamous Northwest Passage through the Arctic, then successfully reached the South Pole, beating Robert Falcon Scott. Both expeditions used Nansen's *Fram*. Mt Amundsen (2317m) can be seen from the wonderful Whitbourn Valley, accessible from Cattle Flat on the Rees–Dart Track.

2

NANSEN AND JOHANSEN PEAKS

Mt Aspiring National Park

Johansen Peak (2070m) and Nansen Peak (2008m) are significant summits on the remote Barrier Range, which rises high above the Dart Valley. It's possible to reach the Barrier Range from Daleys Flat Hut using a route beside the Margaret Burn and up onto Seal Col, from where Johansen Peak is an easy climb (although Nansen Peak is much more inaccessible).

In a sad aside, Hjalmar Johansen later joined Roald Amundsen's South Pole expedition. But after arguing with Amundsen, Johansen was left out of the successful polar party. He never fully recovered, reverted to alcoholism and committed suicide in 1913. He was largely forgotten until a biographer highlighted his achievements in 1997.

3

SHACKLETON GLACIER

West Coast

The Whataroa River and its tributaries are spectacular places, with high mountains, steep glaciers and meltwater lakes. Although tough gorge-going, tracks lead up the Whataroa to Butler Junction Hut and Top Butler Hut. Beyond is Ice Lake, which occasionally freezes in winter and bears a strong resemblance to an Antarctic scene. Fittingly enough, four of the glaciers here are named after polar explorers: Nansen and Shackleton, as well as the Australian Douglas Mawson and Englishman Gino Watkins.

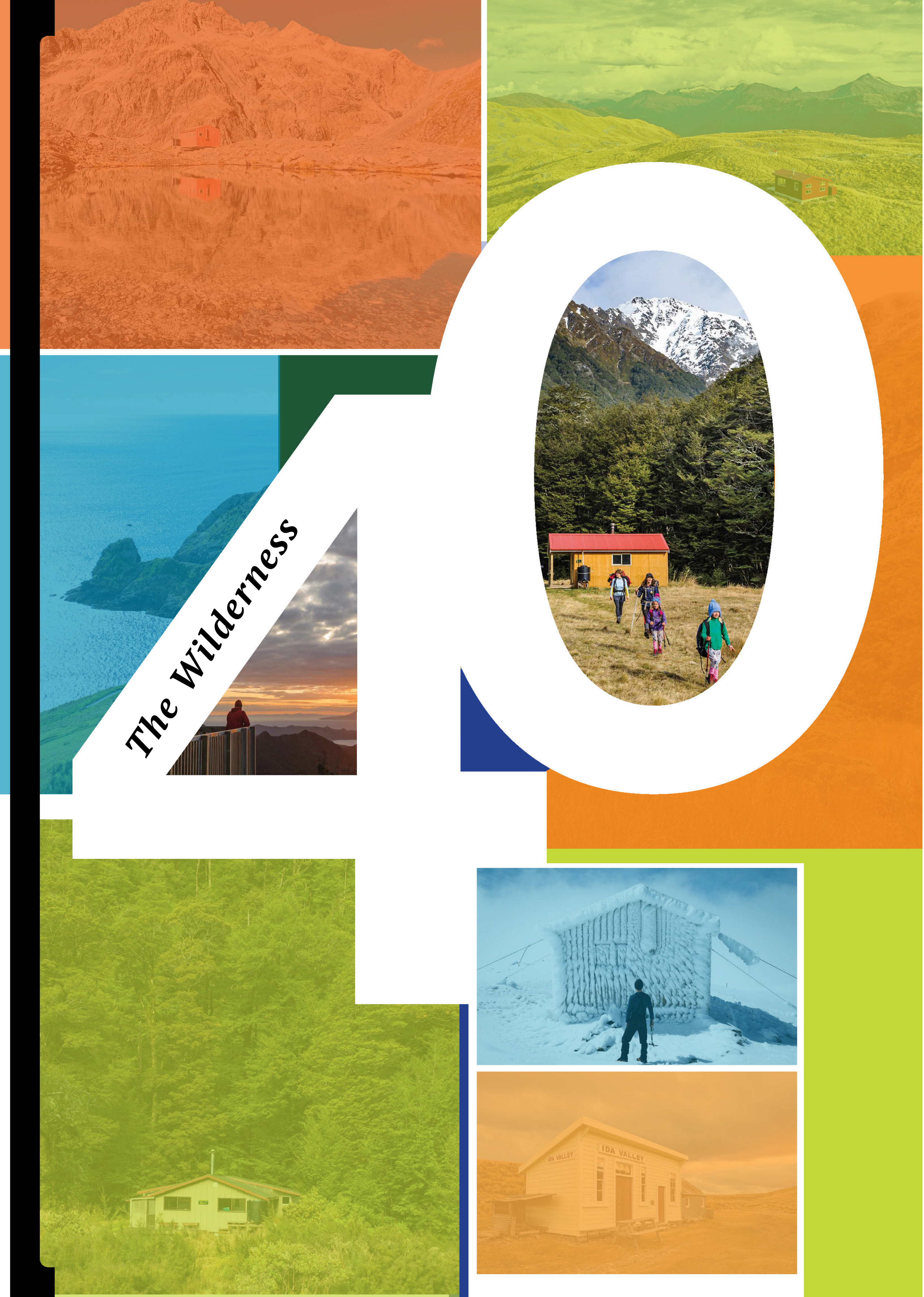
4

DENNISTOUN GLACIER

Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park

What about New Zealanders? While calling him a polar explorer is a stretch too far, Jim Dennistoun was a pioneering explorer and mountaineer, whose first ascent of Mt D'Archiac was a master class in daring. In 1911-12, Dennistoun visited Antarctica, when he accompanied the ship *Terra Nova* south during the relief journey for Scott's ill-fated South Pole expedition.

He survived all his Southern Alps journeys and the Antarctic trip only to die from wounds in a German prison camp during the First World War. Commemorating Dennistoun are a peak and glacier in the head of the Godley Glacier, New Zealand's second longest. Nearby is Terra Nova Pass, an exhilarating trans-alpine route leading into the Rangitātā.


IDA VALLEY
IDA VALLEY

The Wilderness 40

TOP HUTS

They're in the bush, alongside rivers and in the mountains, offering shelter, places of community, and reminders of the past. And some are in locations to make your heart sing.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

WHY ARE HUTS SO DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN OUR OUTDOOR CULTURE?

The first answer is obvious: shelter. New Zealand is a mountainous country with a tempestuous climate. Ever since the ancestors of Māori first stepped ashore, the need for refuge in the wilds of Aotearoa has been abundantly obvious. Today, hut density and distribution in New Zealand mirrors the environment; the wetter and more rugged it is, usually the more huts there are. In the winterless north, a handful of huts; on the wild and wet mountains of Tai Poutini/the West Coast, hundreds.

But any tramper will quickly tell you that shelter is not the only appeal of a backcountry hut.

How about history? New Zealand boasts huts of many vintages, from stone huts used in the farming and gold mining past, to the classic deer-culling huts built in their hundreds by the Forest Service, and, more recently, the clutch of DOC huts that have brought new standards of comfort. Then there are plenty of quirky, unique, rustic or just plain weird huts as well.

Communality? Like a marae, huts offer communal living, bringing all the best and worst that offers. So crowding, snoring, selfishness (countered more often by conversation), sharing and comradeship. Stories flourish around the fire, on the deck, at the dining table; shared with strangers and old friends alike.

And that brings us to location. Aside from their welcome shelter and society, we value huts above all else for their stunning settings: on mountaintops, by lakeshores and riversides, in forest-fringed clearings, above glaciers, and on tussock plateaus. New Zealand has a diversity matched by few other parts of the world.

Picking the *Wilderness* top hut locations has involved long debate between the editor and contributors, and tough decisions to whittle down the list to just 40.

So here they are: the best of the best, huts with locations ranging from the verdant kauri forests and stark volcanoes of the north, to the gritty granite coastlines of Rakiura in the south, and the multitudinous mountains in between.

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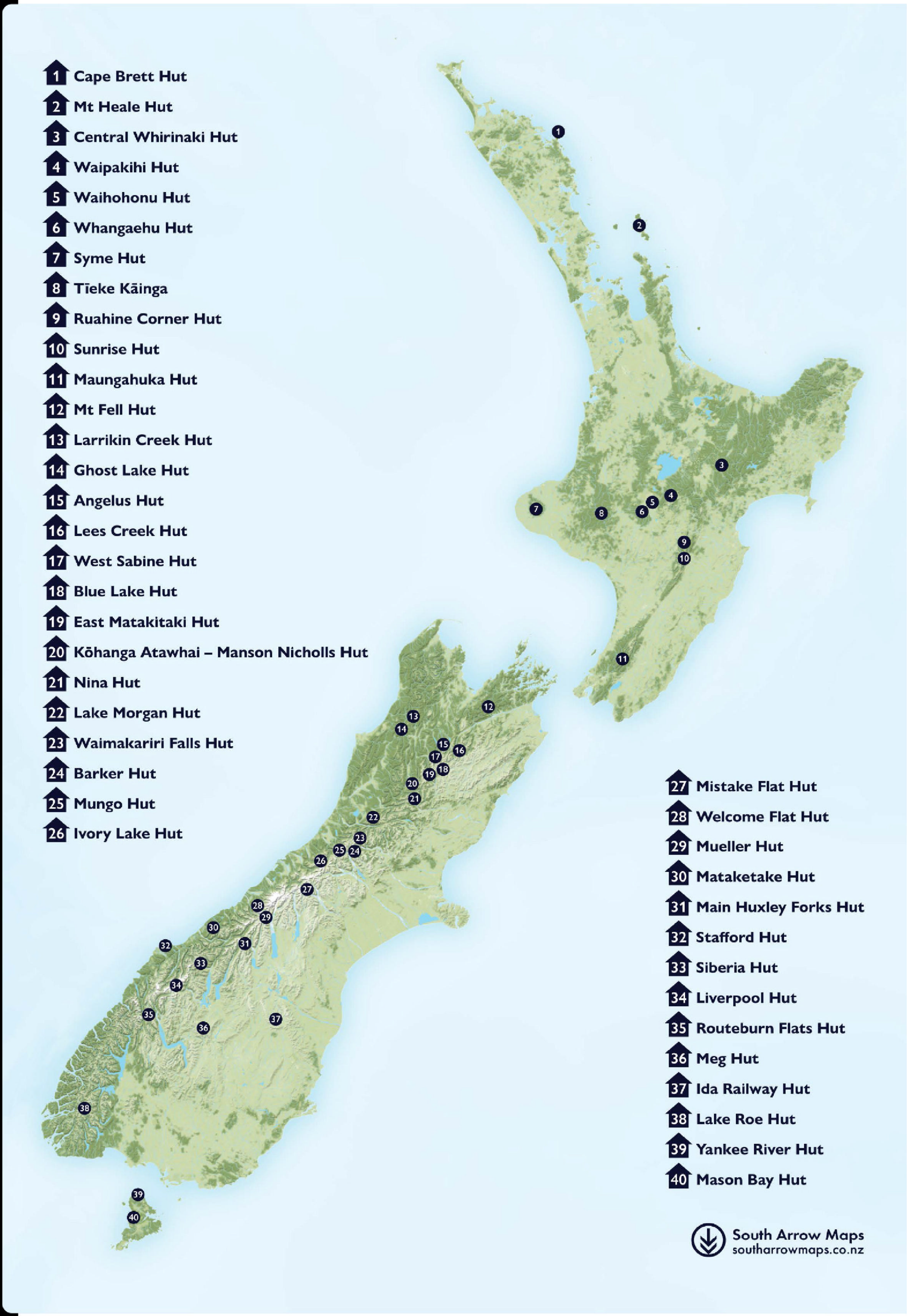

1 Cape Brett Hut
2 Mt Heale Hut
3 Central Whirinaki Hut
4 Waipakihi Hut
5 Waihohonu Hut
6 Whangaehu Hut
7 Syme Hut
8 Tīeke Kāinga
9 Ruahine Corner Hut
10 Sunrise Hut
11 Maungahuka Hut
12 Mt Fell Hut
13 Larrikin Creek Hut
14 Ghost Lake Hut
15 Angelus Hut
16 Lees Creek Hut
17 West Sabine Hut
18 Blue Lake Hut
19 East Matakitaki Hut
20 Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut
21 Nina Hut
22 Lake Morgan Hut
23 Waimakariri Falls Hut
24 Barker Hut
25 Mungo Hut
26 Ivory Lake Hut
27 Mistake Flat Hut
28 Welcome Flat Hut
29 Mueller Hut
30 Mataketake Hut
31 Main Huxley Forks Hut
32 Stafford Hut
33 Siberia Hut
34 Liverpool Hut
35 Routeburn Flats Hut
36 Meg Hut
37 Ida Railway Hut
38 Lake Roe Hut
39 Yankee River Hut
40 Mason Bay Hut

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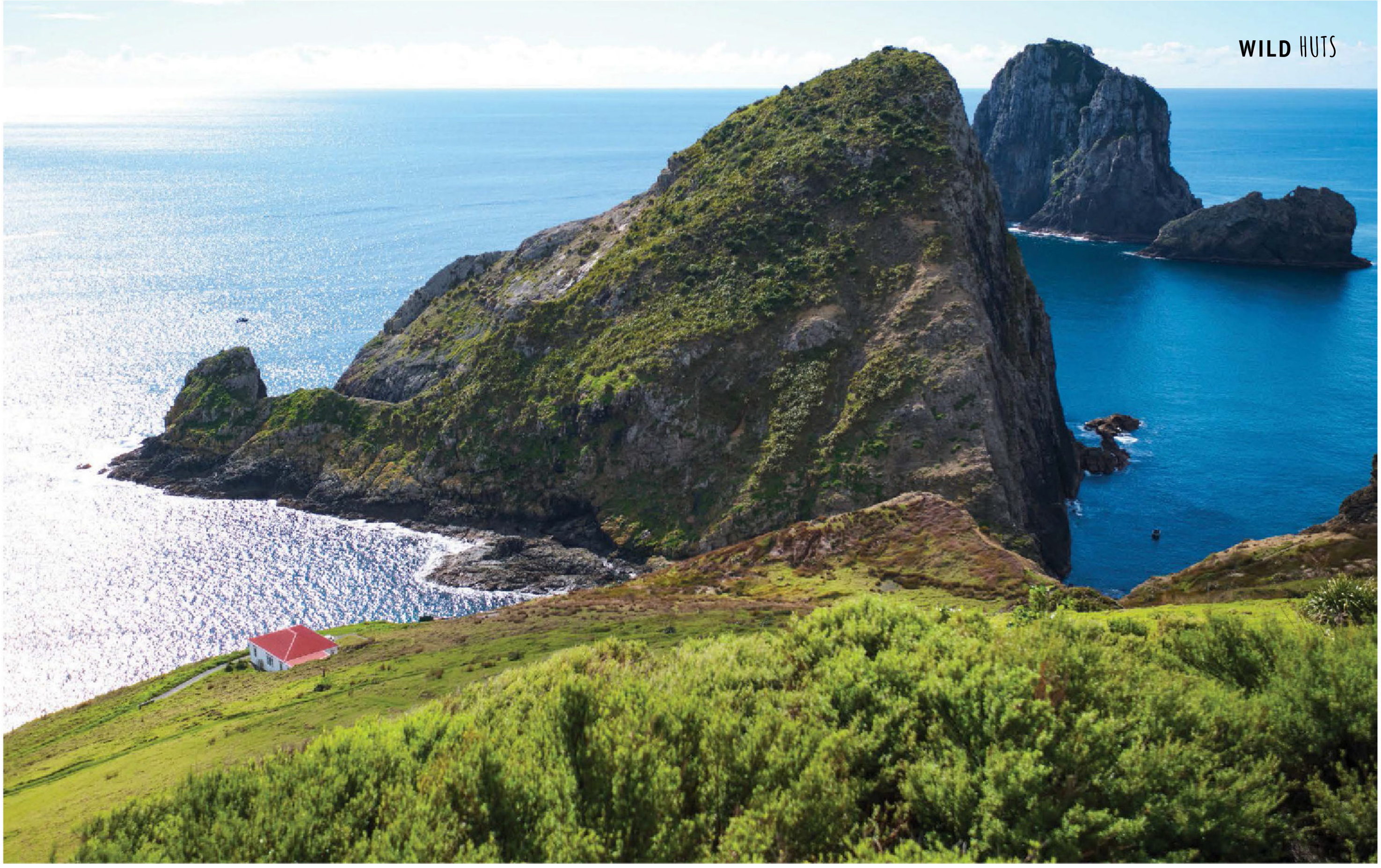
MATTHEW CATTIN



Cape Brett Hut

1

Cape Brett Hut,
Northland

A lighthouse keeper's hut at world's end.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

Cape Brett Track ranks frequently on international lists of the world's greatest hikes. While this may leave some Kiwi trampers scratching their heads, it actually makes a great deal of sense. On how many tramps can you spend the night in a lighthouse keeper's cottage on the fingertip of a wind-swept cape? The isolated hut is difficult to get to, especially in summer when the exposed track threatens dehydration and heat stroke. Visitors who make the effort are treated to a homely nautical hut with ocean views, salty breeze, and an opportunity to spot whales and dolphins from the doorstep.

Grade Difficult **Time** 4hr.

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Watching the sunset over Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island from Mt Heale Hut

2

Mt Heale Hut,
Great Barrier Island

Auckland's best hut lies perched with standout views over the Hauraki Gulf and to Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Built in 2010, the comfortable 20-bunk Mt Heale Hut offers a haven on the Aotea Circuit of New Zealand's sixth largest island. The hut occupies a forested locale beneath its namesake Mt Heale, an impressive volcanic spire. It can be reached on the Palmers Track from Windy Canyon over the summit of Mt Hobson/Hirakimata (627m), the highest peak of Aotea/Great Barrier Island. Enjoy a circuit around the Kaiaraara Valley, then head out via the Peach Cove and Tramline Tracks, pausing for a soak in the Kaitoke Hot Springs en route.

Grade Easy-moderate **Time** 2–3 days.

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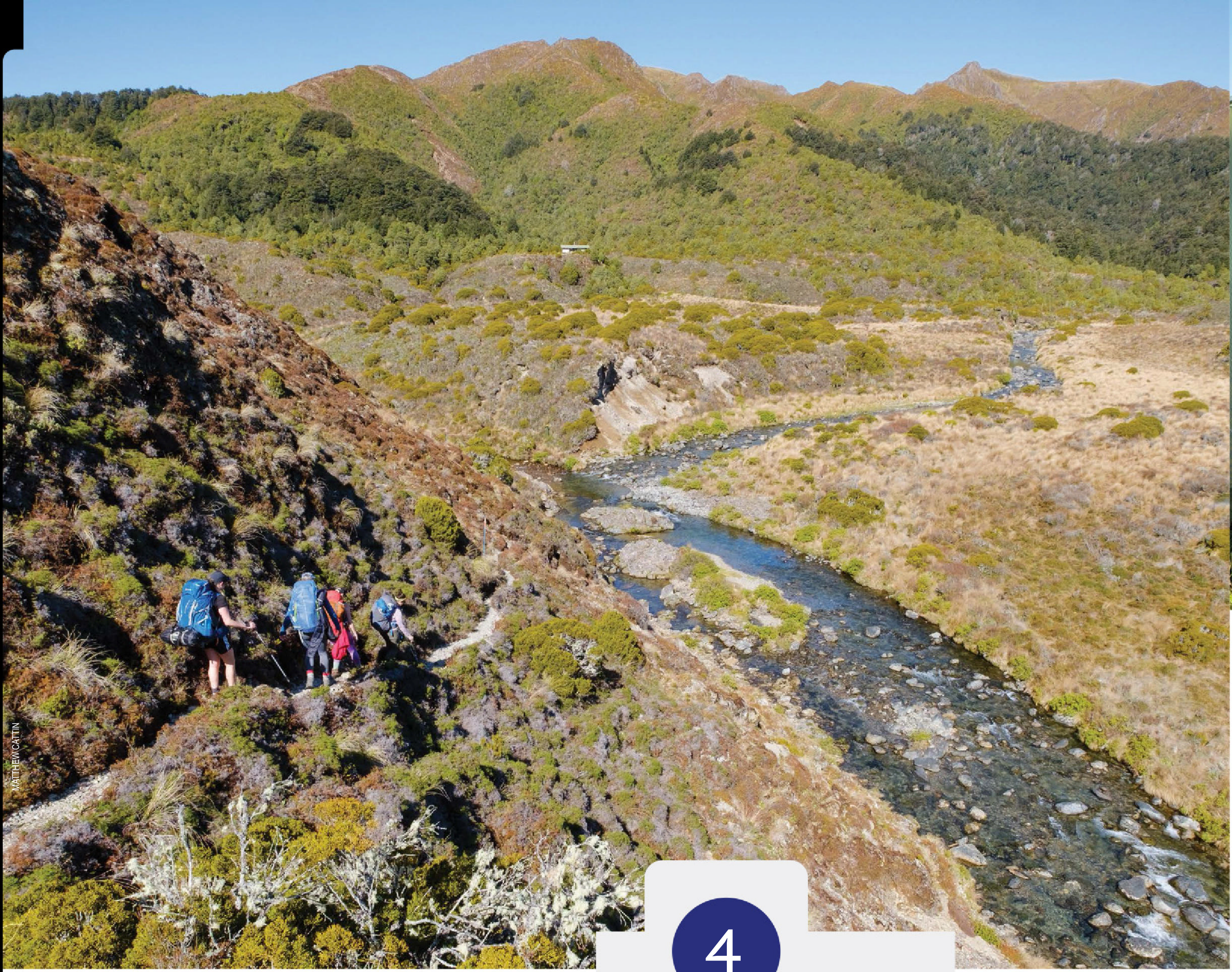
MATTHEW CATTIN

Approaching Waipakihi Hut on the Umukarikari Track

3

Central Whirinaki Hut,
Whirinaki Forest Park

Surrender to complete peace in Whirinaki's enchanting forest sanctuary.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

It's no coincidence that my best ever hut sleep was enjoyed at Central Whirinaki Hut. Like a storybook oasis, the tranquil 25-bunker sits in the shade of ancient trees in a picture perfect clearing. The visitor's book logs dozens of whio sightings in the Whirinaki River, which whispers within earshot of the hut, and by night resident ruru and kiwi call beneath a dazzling night sky. You won't find flashy views, but with the woodfire keeping the cold and the critters at bay, there is deep peace to be found here.

Grade Easy **Time** From River Road, 5hr; From Plateau car park, 3hr.

4

Waipakihi Hut,
Kaimanawa Forest Park

Sun, swimming holes and idyllic valley scenery.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

Waipakihi Valley is a tramping utopia. Flanked by accessible tops, the wide, tussocky valley floor with its crystal river and numerous swimming holes feels like a slice of the South Island. Its namesake hut is perched on a sunny ledge with its back to the bushline. It's simple and cosy with two bunk rooms separated by a well-stocked kitchen and living space. The deck faces due west – perfect for afternoon basking and sunsets over the valley.

Grade Difficult
Time 6–8hr via Umukarikari Track.

LEADER OF THE PACK

After 20 years of leading the pack, Big Agnes decided to make their own.

Big Agnes has spent the last 20 years figuring out how to sleep more comfortably outdoors. Along the way, awards have been won, industry-leading tent designs and manufacturing have been introduced and its original sleep system has evolved into an entire sleeping bag and mattress line. Last year, the company decided it was time to carry all that gear in their own Big Agnes packs.

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Big Agnes packs include an entire collection from daypacks to large-capacity multi-dayers. The intention was to create the 'Copper Spur of packs'. Big Agnes's award-winning Copper Spur tents integrate tough and ultralight materials with packable yet spacious design. This evolved into ultralight and minimalist ideas, with the concept of 'carrying the weight in your pack, not the pack weight'.

DESIGNING WITH INTENTION

Big Agnes designers and developers worked for two years to combine recycled and durable materials with lightweight attributes. A minimalist approach was taken: gear-specific pocket designs were eliminated and replaced by versatile stash-mesh and enclosed zip options. In overnight and multi-day packs, stability and load transfer were prioritised. The suspension system – from the hipbelt to shoulder straps – integrates directly into the frame which allows more weight to be carried, more comfortably.

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Big Agnes's philosophy is: 'your pack shouldn't weigh more than the gear inside'. The women's Sun Dog 45 and men's Prospector 50 will fit a wearer securely and cope with an 18kg maximum load – enough for overnight trips and thru-hikes. 1280g (w) 1450g (m).

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The women's Garnet 60 and men's Parkview 63 have injection moulded frame sheets that are anatomically designed and feature custom adjustments for a perfect fit. There are multiple storage/ organiser options, including removable lid and hipbelt pockets. 1620g (w), 1640g (m).

EXPLORE THE BIG AGNES PACK RANGE AT WWW.GEARSHOP.CO.NZ

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Waihohonu Hut in Tongariro National Park is luxurious and with views of Mts Ruapehu and Ngāuruhoe

5

Waihohonu Hut,
Tongariro National Park

Tongariro's newest hut boasts two huge glass windows, each perfectly framing a view of a different volcano.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Waihohonu Hut is the third to occupy the area, forming key accommodation for both the Tongariro Northern Circuit and the Ruapehu Round the Mountain Track. The hut can also be reached on an easy track from the Desert Road, putting it within reach of families and lesser experienced trampers. With a woodburner, solar lighting and hot water, the 28-bunk hut is definitely one of the country's more luxurious. And with Ruapehu framed in one window and Ngāuruhoe in the other, it's a stunning place to take in the volcanic scenery. The hut must be booked during summer months (October to April).

Grade Easy **Time** 2hr.

6

Whangaehu Hut,
Tongariro National Park

Watch the sunrise from a hut overlooking the country's premier lahar path.

BY HAZEL PHILLIPS

This is the highest hut in the park, at 2060m. It's perched on a rocky knoll overlooking the Whangaehu River – the main lahar path from Ruapehu's Crater Lake / Te Wai ā-moe. That means you're in the box seat if Koro Ruapehu decides to blow its top while you're overnighting. Looking east over the Desert Road and out to the Kaimanawa, Whangaehu Hut catches the sunrise, which lights up the craggy surroundings and spectacularly carved catchment below. Just don't take a wrong turn on your way to the loo (the cliff is nigh).

Grade Easy **Time** 2-3hr from Tukino ski field, or a full day expedition over the top from Whakapapa.

7

Syme Hut,
Egmont National Park

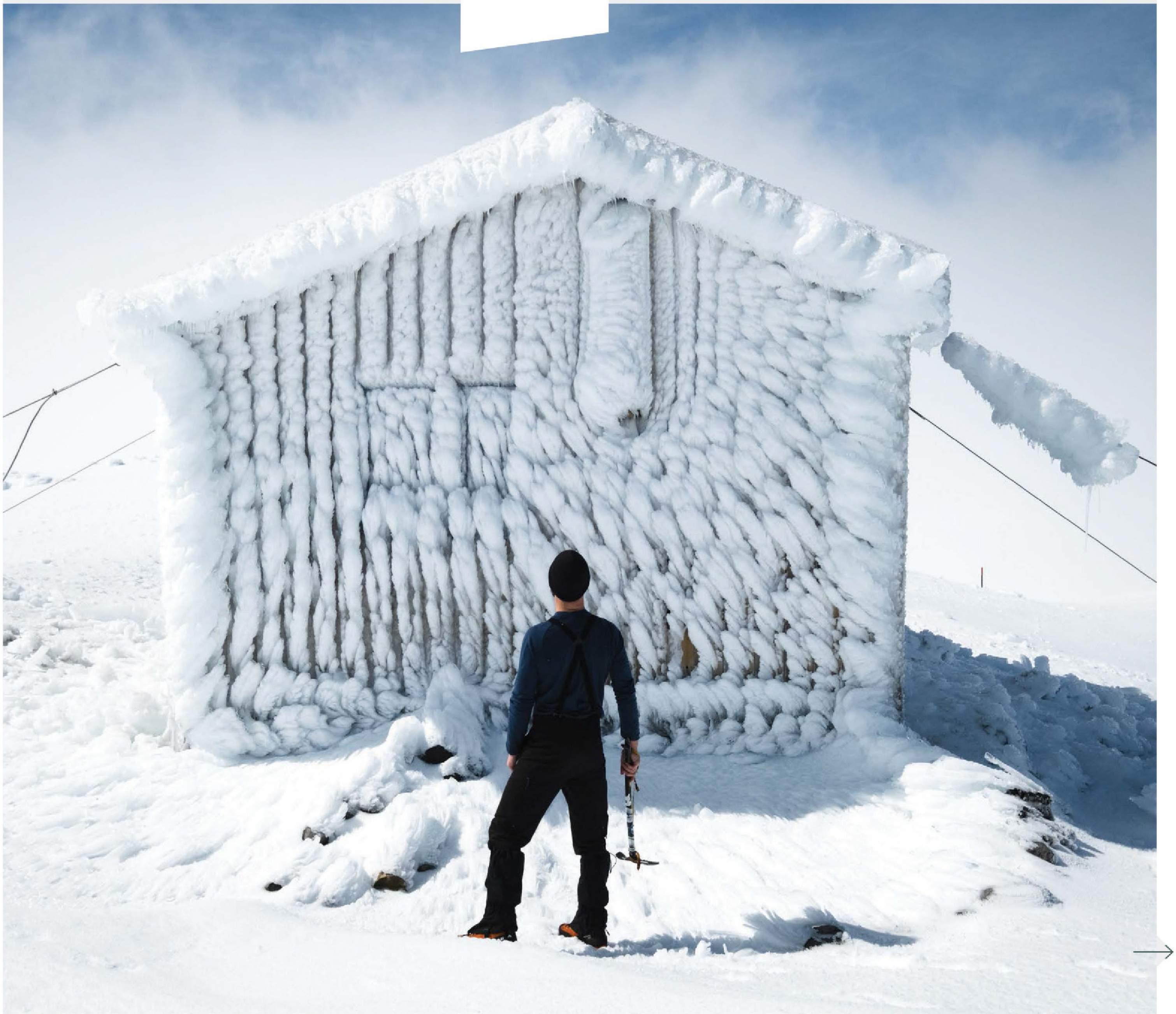
An unforgettable night in a mountain-top ice box.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

Small, damp and cold, Syme Hut is likely the least comfortable hut on this list but its location is beyond hyperbole. Fastened by wires to Fantham's Peak/ Panitahi, the hut is as precarious as it is spectacular. Taranaki Maunga dominates the doorstep, its summit attainable within a few hours for experienced climbers. Those content to climb only to the hut can watch the others from the window. Accessible year round, Syme Hut is undoubtedly at its most dramatic in winter. when half a metre of rime ice can seal it in a frozen tomb. A night here will be the best $10 you'll ever spend.

Grade Difficult **Time** 4hr.

Syme Hut may be cold, but it's also unforgettable



MATTHEW CATTIN

8

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Tieke Kainga is a marae and visitors are welcomed in a powhiri

Tieke Kainga,

Whanganui National Park

There's culture and hospitality in this most welcoming hut.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

Visitors are so lucky to have access to Tieke Kainga. The functioning marae is unlike any other Great Walks hut, in that people are treated as whanau/family rather than manuhiri/visitors. Canoes are left on the banks of the Whanganui River and gear is lugged up the steep banks to the marae grounds, which overlook a magnificent bend in the river.

In the afternoon, trampers are welcomed onto the marae in a powhiri and invited to introduce themselves in whichever language they feel comfortable. Once the tapu is lifted, guests can settle in for the evening, chat with the hosts and enjoy the fantastic kitchen facilities, which include an oven.

A stay here is peaceful, comfortable and unforgettable, but remember to leave koha and embrace the expectations of the iwi.

Grade Moderate **Time** 3 days from Taumarunui, 2 days from Whakahoro.

SAM HARRISON

Sunrise Hut is no place for a lie-in

9

Ruahine Corner Hut,
Ruahine Forest Park

Located on the boundary of a great tussock plateau and a wall of pāhautea, this hut has a location like no other.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

At Ruahine Corner, past fires created a vast plain of red tussocklands, leaving a distinct forest edge – one of the largest swathes of pāhautea/mountain cedar in the country. On this edge, Ruahine Corner Hut has views over the extensive tussock grasslands, towards Ruapehu. The hut is an ideal place from which to explore the surrounding area, fringed by limestone bluffs and studded with tors and tarns. While somewhat remote, getting to Ruahine Corner is possible from several routes. Most direct is from the east via Golden Crown Ridge, Piopio and Potae. From the west, link routes over the Mokai Patea, down the Maropea River and past Lake Colenso.

Grade Moderate-difficult
Time 2–3 days.

10

Sunrise Hut,
Ruahine Forest Park

Enjoy sunrise over the sea in this family classic.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

There's no such thing as a sleep-in at this classic Ruahine hut. The moment the sun rises, brilliant gold barges through the windows. Sleepy trampers – if they're not outside already – layer up to enjoy the spectacle. The hut is an ideal introduction to tramping. The track winds over gentle switchbacks and through beech forest for a couple of hours, but the spacious hut is ample reward. It sits atop a 1300m peak above Buttercup Hollow, sheltered from predominant westerlies by a battalion of wind-battered trees. Views extend over Hawke's Bay to the ocean, but the best vista is behind the hut – a glimpse over Waipawa Valley and the surrounding peaks.

Grade Easy **Time** 3hr.

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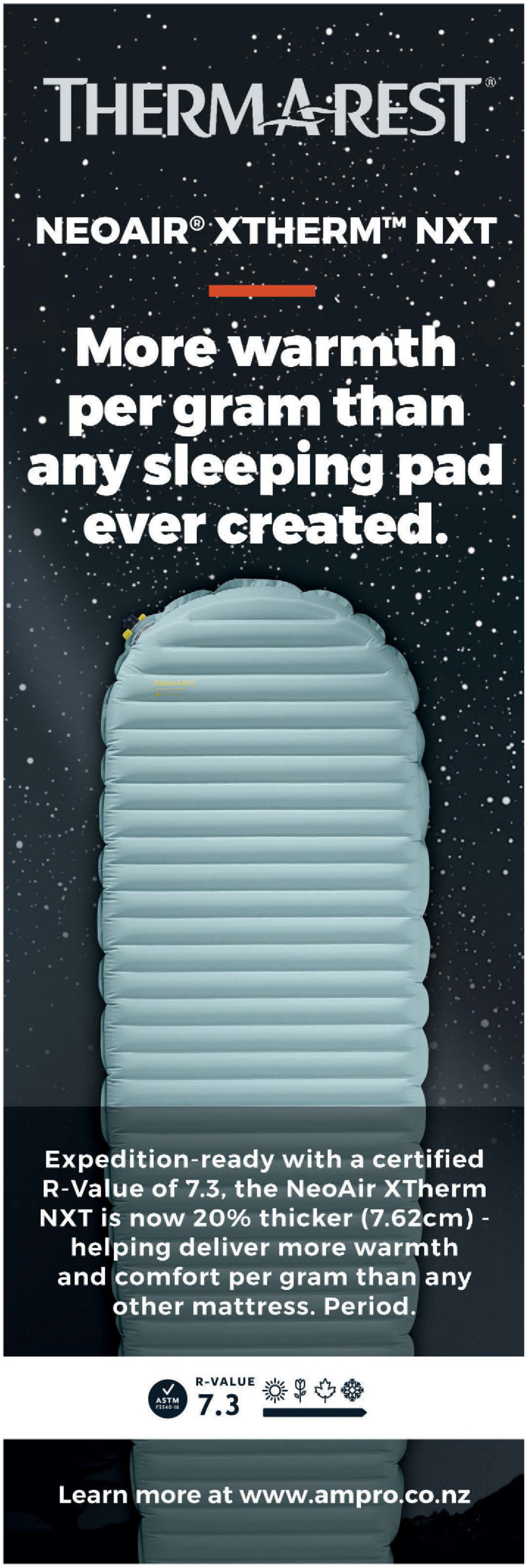

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11

Maungahuka Hut,

Tararua Forest Park

Located beside a large tarn and with a view of a great array of Tararua ridges.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Set beside the largest tarn in the Tararua Range, in an appealing bowl-like basin, Maungahuka is undoubtedly in the best location of any hut in Tararua Forest Park. Getting there involves a tramp from Ōtaki Forks via Field Hut, a traverse of the rugged Main Range, negotiating the infamous Tararua Peaks ladder, then a final ascent to the hut. Beyond, continue along the Main Range, past Anderson Hut, then an exit via Waitewaewae Hut to complete a satisfying and classic Tararua circuit.

Grade Difficult
Time 4–5 days for the circuit.

12

Mt Fell Hut,

Mt Richmond Forest Park

Well-placed bushline huts provide water, firewood and shelter en route to exposed, windswept tops.

BY RAY SALISBURY

The Richmond Ranges south of Nelson offer spectacular tramping opportunities, with rolling tussock tops, rocky peaks and bush-clad valleys reminiscent of North Island terrain.

This iron-clad NZFS-era hut, built in 1964, was recently moved by an airforce chopper, then given a new lease of life by the Nelson Tramping Club. The hut features memorable views to Mt Fishtail, poking above the folded ridges of the Marlborough hinterland.

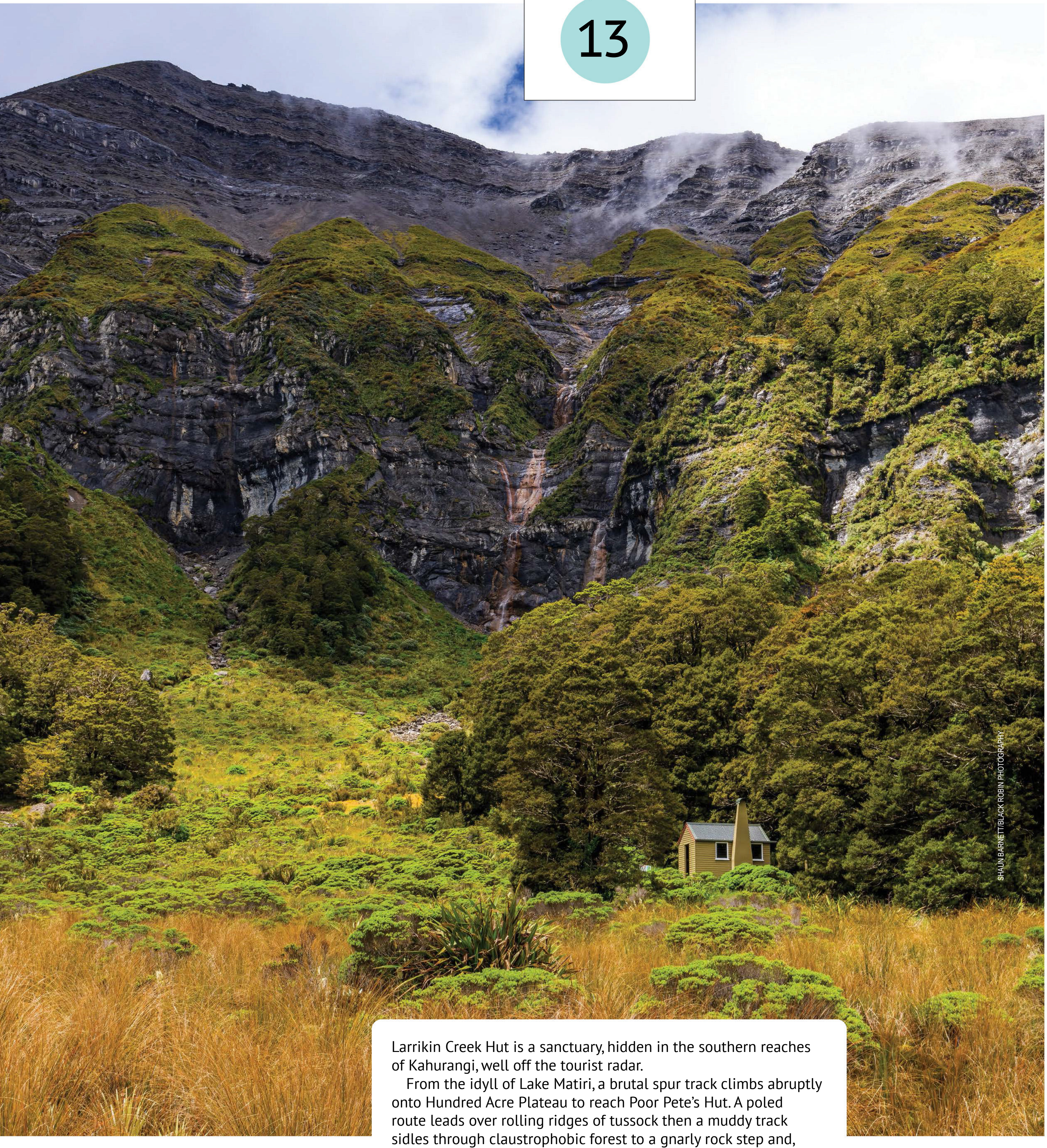
Side-trips include ascents of Mt Fell and Johnston Peak. Other routes include a 22km circuit over Mt Richmond, or the infamous fixed-wire traverse down to the Pelorus River.

Grade Moderate **Time** 6-7hr.

Maungahuka Hut is set in a superb location

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

13



SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Larrikin Creek Hut,
Kahurangi National Park

This modest four-bunker is nestled into a copse of beech trees between the 100 and 1000 Acre plateaux.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Larrikin Creek Hut is a sanctuary, hidden in the southern reaches of Kahurangi, well off the tourist radar.

From the idyll of Lake Matiri, a brutal spur track climbs abruptly onto Hundred Acre Plateau to reach Poor Pete's Hut. A poled route leads over rolling ridges of tussock then a muddy track sidles through claustrophobic forest to a gnarly rock step and, finally, the hut. It's a struggle, but that makes the place seem sweeter. Opportunities for exploration include an ascent of a mudstone 'Matterhorn' named The Needle. Nearby, the Devil's Dining Table – also known as the Hundred Acre Plateau – is a subalpine tableland encircled by an impenetrable line of cliffs. Closer to the hut, Larrikins Creek provides a pleasant swimming spot before the waterway disappears over the edge.

Grade Moderate **Time** 2 days.

Larrikin Creek Hut is a sanctuary in Kahurangi National Park

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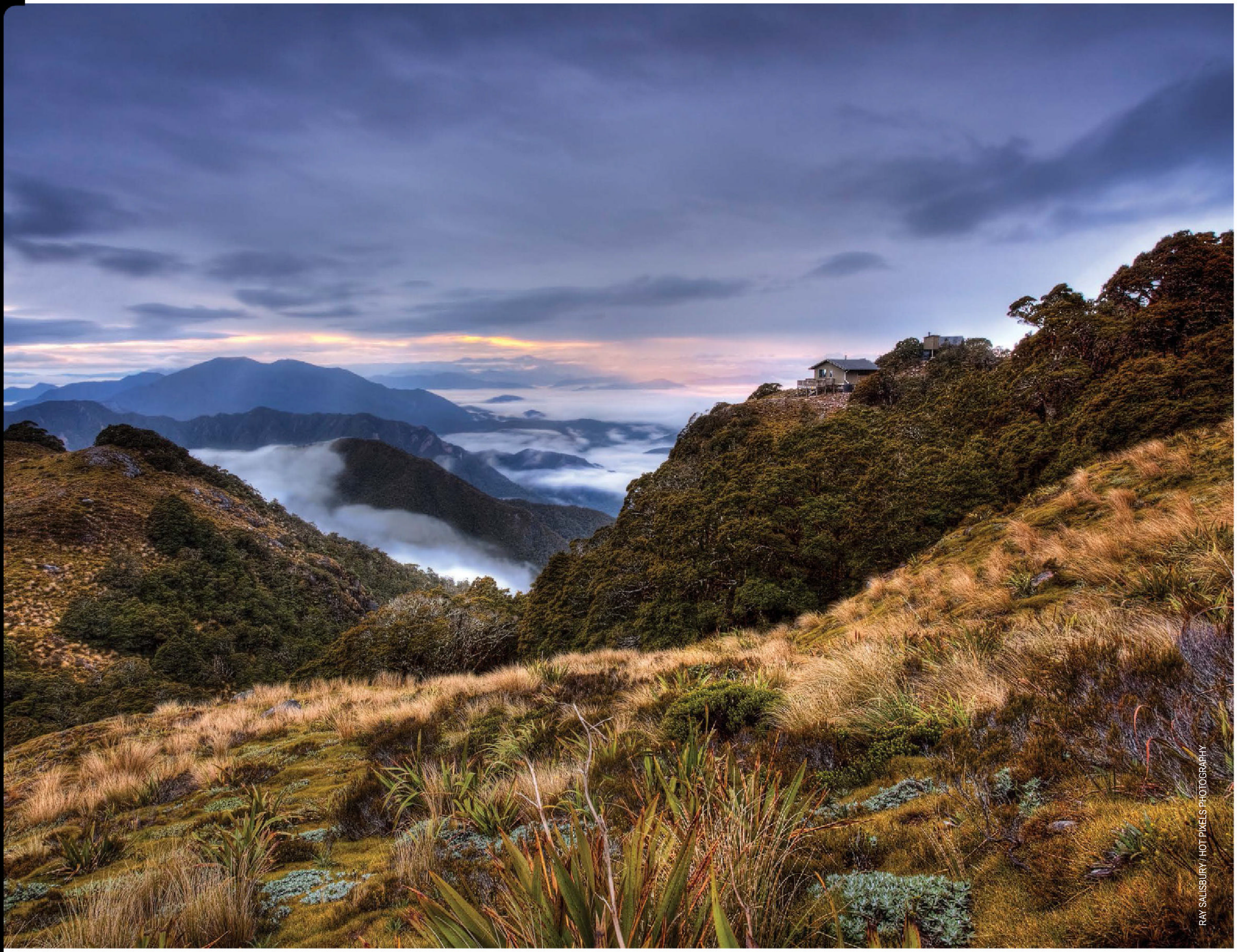
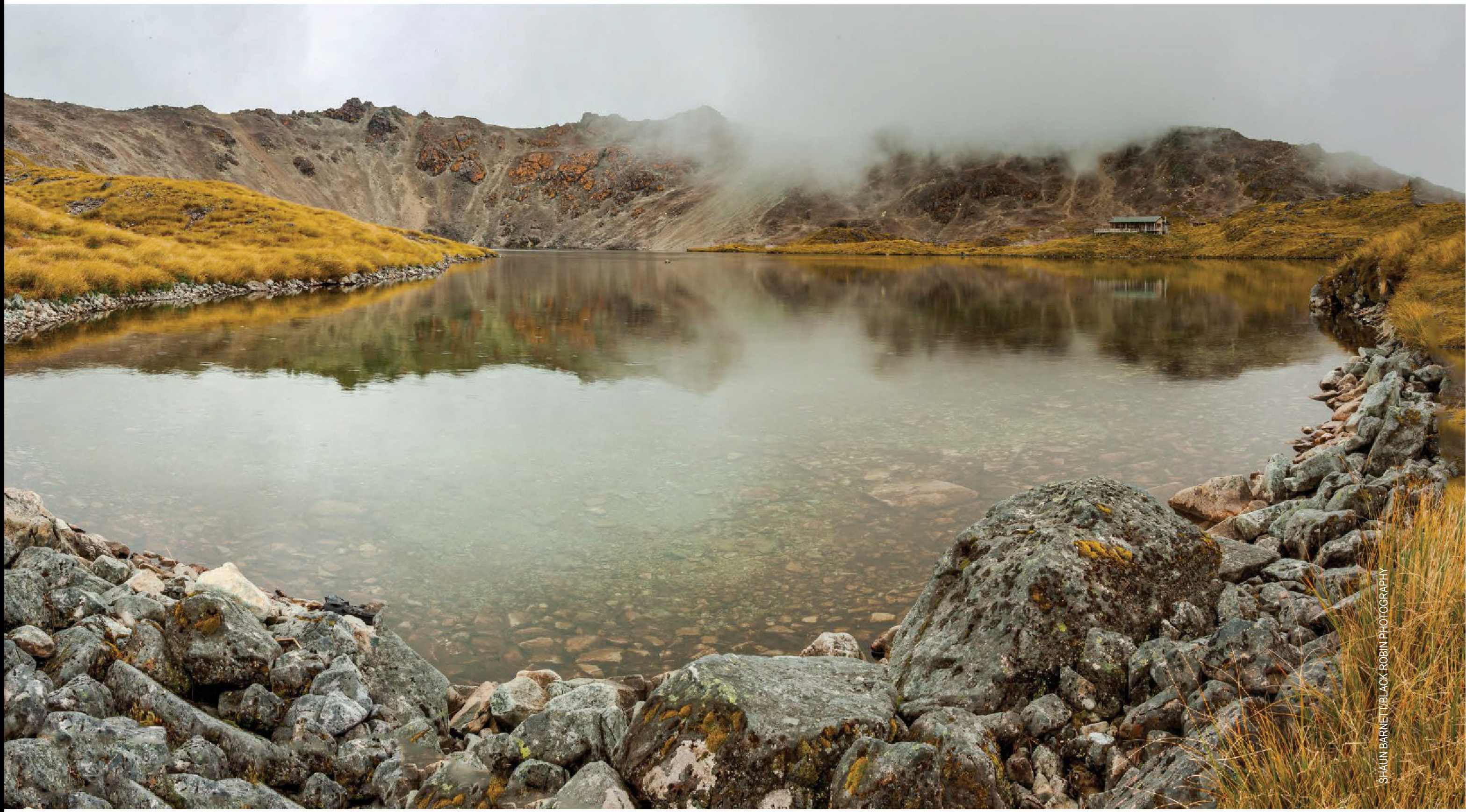

RAY SALISBURY / HOT PIXELS PHOTOGRAPHY

Ghost Lake Hut perched above a cliff face


SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Angelus Hut sits on the shores of an alpine lake

14

Ghost Lake Hut,
Kahurangi National Park

Suspended between the Lyell and the Mokihinui watersheds, this is the gem of Old Ghost Road huts.

BY RAY SALISBURY

This hut has a gentle approach up a historic mining road, now a popular cycle track, unusual for a sub-alpine trip. From Lyell Saddle a series of switchbacks leads to the Lyell Range. It's through cloud forest and dracophyllum, as the path skirts Heaven's Gate and Rocky Tor to arrive at this bespoke cabin perched above a cliff face. In cloudy weather, an exquisite panorama is revealed below: a circular tarn of yellowy-green hue materialises like an apparition – Ghost Lake. Further along the ridge, rocky pinnacles stab into the mist like a Tolkien dream. After dusk, the lights of Murchison twinkle like stars in the east.

Grade Easy-moderate **Time** 2 days.

15

Angelus Hut,
Nelson Lakes National Park

A spectacular alpine location that showcases the best of Nelson Lakes National Park.

BY SAM HARRISON

It sits at 1660m on the sparkling shores of Lake Angelus / Rotomaninitua, and is one of New Zealand's premiere alpine huts. The hut and the lake occupy a glacial basin in the heart of the park, surrounded by impressive mountain peaks often capped in snow. Despite feeling remote, the hut can be reached via multiple different routes in just 6hr. The most popular route follows the exposed Robert Ridge, with excellent views over Lake Rotoiti and the St Arnaud Range.

Grade Moderate **Time** 6hr.

16

Lees Creek Hut,
Marlborough

A tidy four-bunker on a grassy flat with the ragged Raglan Range above.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Recently done up by a Backcountry Trust team, there's never been a better reason to visit the lovely Lees Creek. A tributary of the Wairau River, Lees Creek offers pleasant tramping up a beech-cloaked valley to its open headwaters. From the Rainbow Road, cross the Wairau on a swingbridge, then it's an easy tramp, meandering through beech forest and over grassy flats, with the warm Marlborough sun beating down more often than not. Beyond the hut, adventurous trampers might scramble up the surrounding peaks, or climb from the valley head over to the Branch Valley where more huts await.

Grade Moderate **Time** 4hr.

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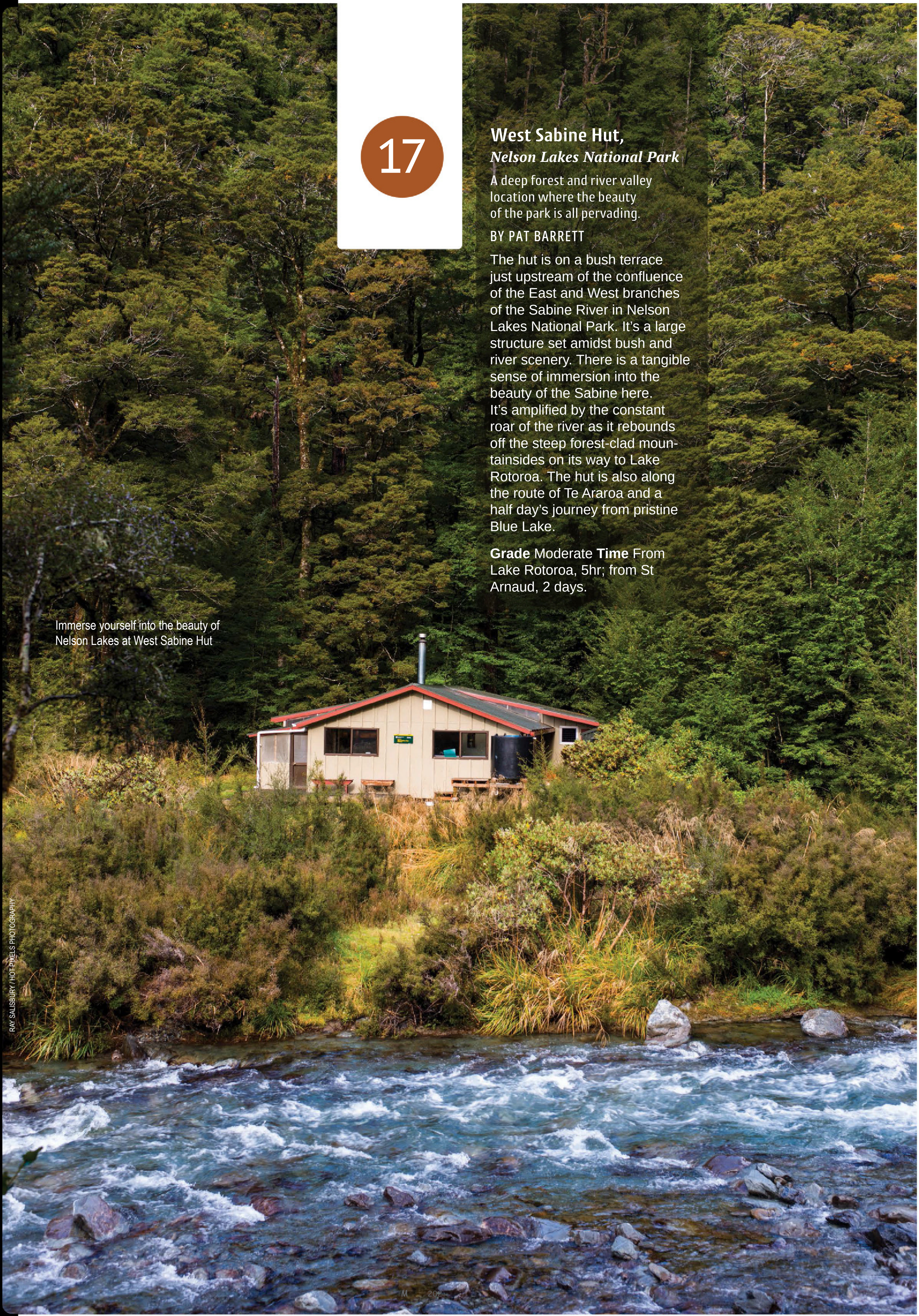


17

West Sabine Hut, *Nelson Lakes National Park*

A deep forest and river valley location where the beauty of the park is all pervading.

BY PAT BARRETT

The hut is on a bush terrace just upstream of the confluence of the East and West branches of the Sabine River in Nelson Lakes National Park. It's a large structure set amidst bush and river scenery. There is a tangible sense of immersion into the beauty of the Sabine here. It's amplified by the constant roar of the river as it rebounds off the steep forest-clad mountainsides on its way to Lake Rotoroa. The hut is also along the route of Te Araroa and a half day's journey from pristine Blue Lake.

Grade Moderate **Time** From Lake Rotoroa, 5hr; from St Arnaud, 2 days.

Immerse yourself into the beauty of Nelson Lakes at West Sabine Hut

RAY SALISBURY / HOT-PIXELS PHOTOGRAPHY

18

Blue Lake Hut,

Nelson Lakes National Park

On this hut's doorstep is a lake with the clearest water in the world and we aren't joking.

BY HAZEL PHILLIPS

It's surrounded by forest and mountains, but that all pales into the background once you see the real deal: Rotomairewhenua / Blue Lake, with the purest, clearest water in the world. (Please don't swim or do your dishes in it). The hut is nothing of note, and will probably be replaced with a giant tourist barn to house all the Instagrammers, but for now, you can bathe, not in the lake itself, but in its pure blue-green aura. It's also at the intersection of several routes over epic alpine passes – Moss Pass and Waiau Pass – and offers a side trip to Rotopōhueroa / Lake Constance, the feeder lake.

Grade Moderate **Time** 2 days.

19

East Matakitaki Hut,

Nelson Lakes National Park

Located in a quintessential Nelson Lakes landscape next to a clear mountain stream.

BY ROB BROWN

Built in 1962, this hut is one of the few remaining NZFS S70 six-bunk huts that remains unmodified with its original open fire. It's a fine example of what people consider to be a design classic in simplicity and cost effective utility in the New Zealand backcountry. It's also in excellent condition after recent work by a Jobs for Nature team and is managed as a historic asset.

The fire smokes a little if a window isn't ajar, but that only adds to the atmosphere.

The hut is usually visited as part of the classic Nelson Lakes to Lewis Pass trip. It's on the way to Bob's Hut which is another NZFS classic which has provided shelter in the West Matakitaki for over 60 years and is in fine condition.

Grade Moderate **Time** 3 days.

The historic East Matakitaki Hut

ROB BROWN

20

Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut,

Lewis Pass Scenic Reserve

An iconic New Zealand outdoor setting ensconced between lake and bush.

BY PAT BARRETT

This is a newly sited and built hut by the jetty on Lake Daniells. The hut is named after the victims of a landslide tragedy here and has become an enticement for family groups for decades with the bush basin, often reflected in the lake's inky depths. There's a fire pit and sit-out area between hut and lake and there is bound to be birdsong from the forested hills surrounding the lake.

Grade Easy **Time** 3hr.

21

Nina Hut,

Lake Sumner Forest Park

A comfortable hut perched among stunted mountain beech with views of the surrounding ranges.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Nina Hut (10 bunks) is the second hut of this name, built in 2002 to replace a damp, dark affair on the far side of the valley. It is reached on a good tramping track from SH7, beginning from near Palmer Lodge. The track crosses flat, forested terraces until reaching the Nina River shortly before a small gorge (excellent swimming), then crosses to the true right to begin the climb to the hut. The hut is also a base for pest control operations, and the local birdlife is excellent including rare species such as kākā, kākāriki, titipounamu, kea and kiwi. Beyond the hut, tracks lead to Nina Biv or Devils Den Biv.

Grade Easy **Time** 3hr.

22

Lake Morgan Hut,

West Coast

Grandstand views, a remote lake and a hard-to-find hut make Lake Morgan a must-visit.

BY RAY SALISBURY

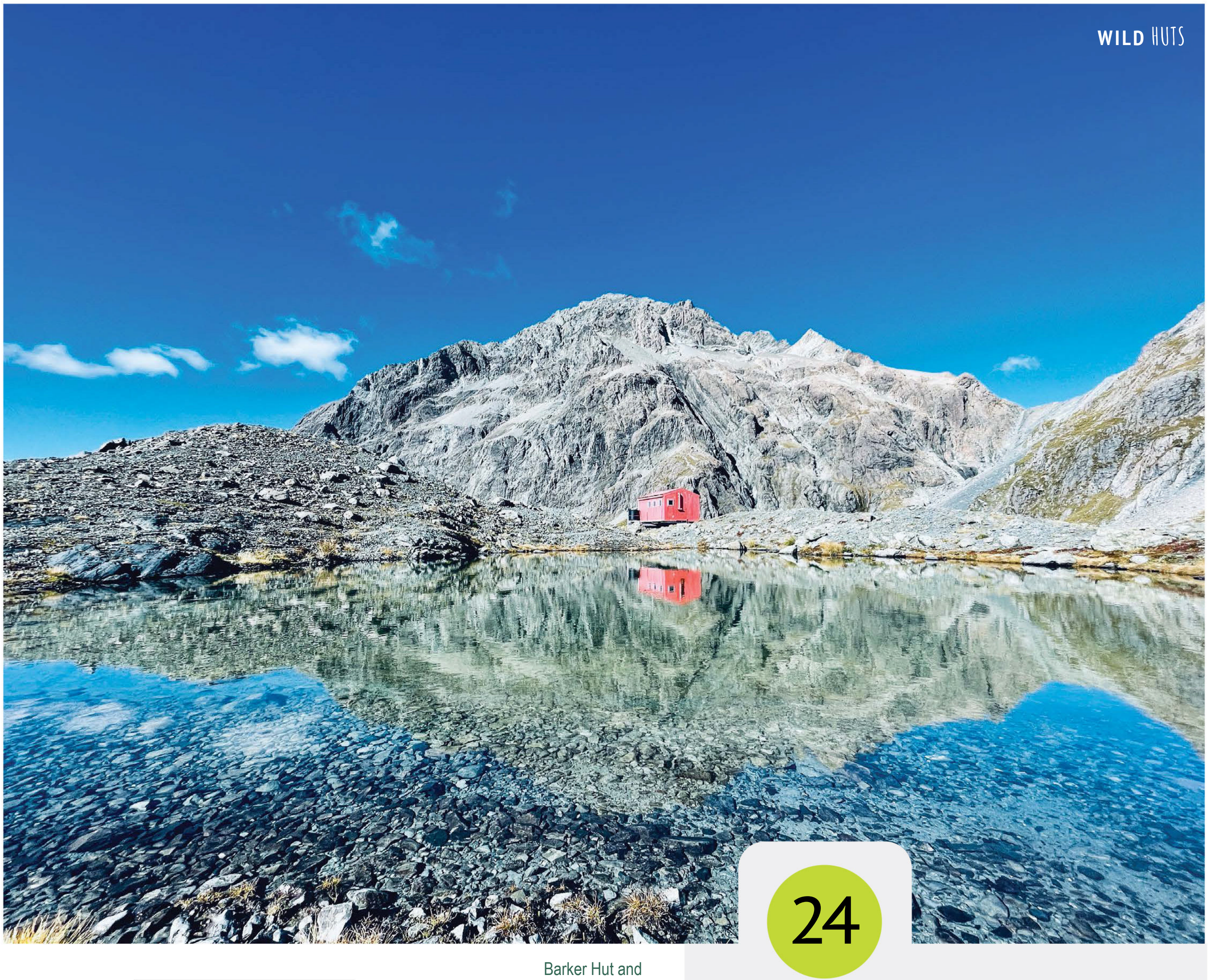
This six-bunker has been recently renovated and is a welcome refuge on a demanding 3–4 day West Coast journey over the Morgan Tops. Human footprints here are as rare as the whistling whio. This is big country, glorious and majestic, where trampers must be competent in off-track navigation.

To reach this remote backwater means struggling up the vertiginous Bryan O’Lyn route above Gloriavale before a delightful traverse over Mt O’Shannessy to a tussock plateau. Lake Morgan is an hour beyond the hut, an over-sized tarn trapped amongst jagged peaks.

Grade Moderate **Time** 7–9hr.

Waimakariri Falls Hut perched above a gorge where the falls spill

SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY



Barker Hut and the nearby tarn

HAZEL PHILLIPS

23

Waimakariri Falls Hut,

Arthur's Pass National Park

Perched in an exceptional location beside a gorge and beneath Mt Rolleston.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

The hut lies near the crest of Kā Tiritiri o te Moana/the Southern Alps, surrounded by several peaks over 2000m, and, in summer, a garden of alpine flowers. Clad in rustic red corrugated iron, the six-bunker has more than a hint of yesteryear. During the Second World War, Canterbury Mountaineering Club members hauled in materials by foot, 22km up the Waimakariri, to build the original bivouac here. By the 1960s, a larger hut was needed, and this time the club used a plane to drop in materials. Access is up the Waimakariri River from near Klondyke Corner, passing Carrington Hut en route. In winter and spring, check avalanche conditions before departing.

Grade Moderate-difficult **Time** 7–9hr.

24

Barker Hut,

Arthur's Pass National Park

Get off the beaten trail to this rustic hut next to a shimmering tarn.

BY HAZEL PHILLIPS

The Canterbury Mountaineering Club runs some huts in stunning locations and Barker is no exception. Sitting on a knoll at the head of the White River, there are views and access to the Marmaduke Dixon Glacier, White Glacier, and peaks such as Harper and Murchison. Kea are frequent visitors and photo opportunities abound at a tarn next to the hut. The hut book is great reading, a who's-who of climbing and adventure, and you're bound to run into someone interesting.

The untracked route up the White River also offers a small challenge.

Grade Moderate **Time** 8-9hr from Klondyke Corner.

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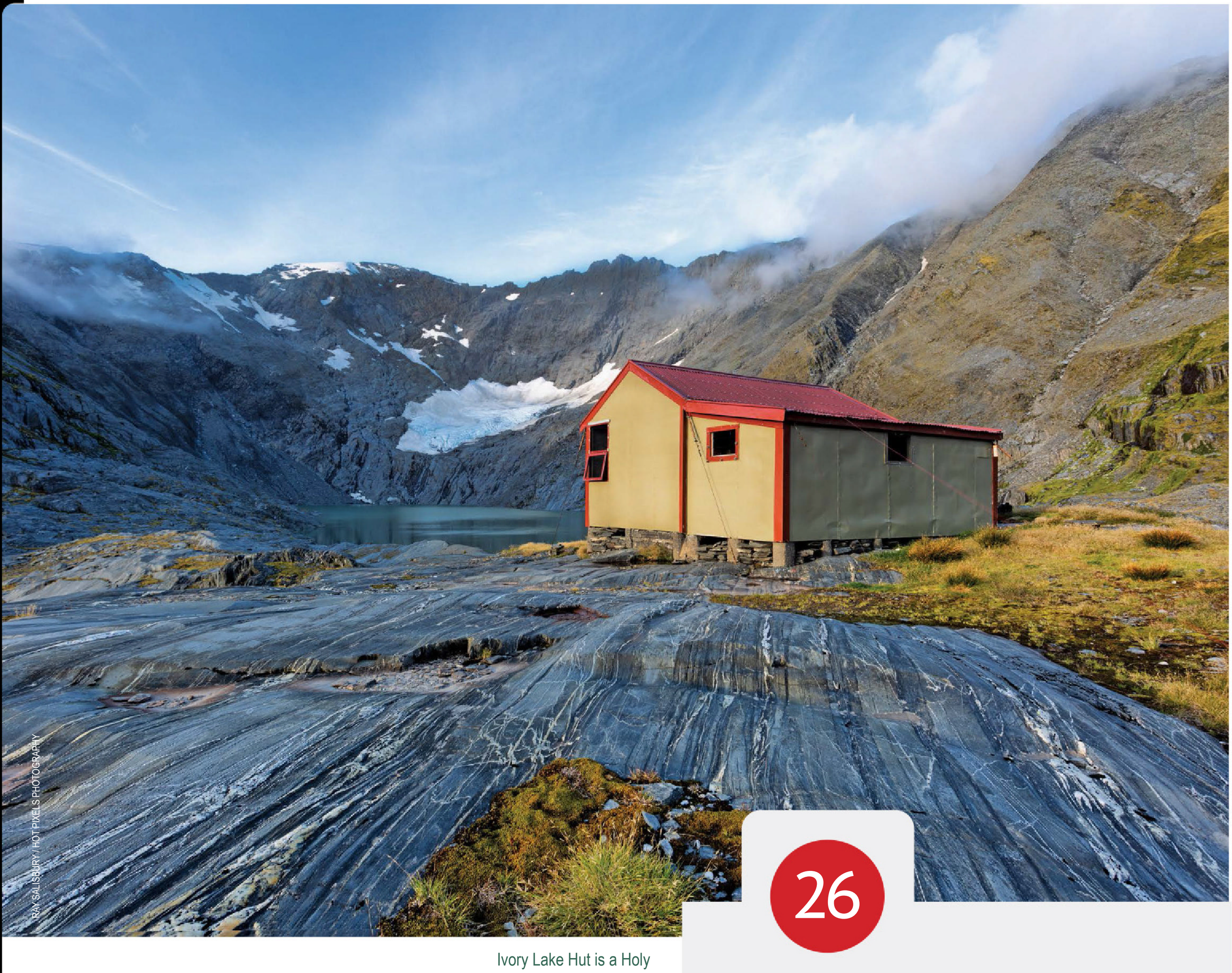

RAY SALISBURY / HOT PIXELS PHOTOGRAPHY

Ivory Lake Hut is a Holy Grail of NZ hut bagging

25

Mungo Hut,

West Coast

With its open fire and remote location this hut oozes original Forest Service history from deer culling days.

BY ROB BROWN

A night spent at Mungo has the feeling of being immersed in remote, yet typical, wild country for this part of the West Coast. You may have already stopped at Brunswick Creek hot pools before plodding up the final 180m from the Park Stream junction to the crow's nest clearing, where this hut sits. It has a small library and woodshed with water from a spring-fed creek beside the hut.

One of the best trips from here is the journey over Hokitika Saddle into the Wilberforce catchment in the east.

Grade Difficult **Time** 3 days.

26

Ivory Lake Hut,

West Coast

BY RAY SALISBURY

This to-die-for destination in the Southern Alps is the Holy Grail for hut baggers.

Ivory Lake is a three-act drama: the glacier, the lake, and the hut.

Erected in 1970 for meteorological research, the hut perches precariously on smooth bedrock above the headwaters of the Waitaha River. This six-bunker, with its quirky lean-to workshop, squats above its namesake lake, a milky viridian circle cradled in an alpine amphitheatre. Beyond, a remnant glacier crumbles over a cliff into the cirque, a shadow of its former self.

This hut is remembered fondly by those who have toiled up the ravines, leapt over house-sized boulders and pushed through heinous West Coast scrub to finally arrive.

Grade Difficult **Time** Allow a week.

27

Mistake Flats Hut,

Te Kahui Kaupeka Conservation Park

Located in grand mountain scenery
at the very foot of the Southern Alps.

BY PAT BARRETT

Deep inside the massive valleys of the upper Rangitata catchment, Mistake Flats Hut takes some effort to reach. It's not due only to the distance, but to the many turbulent rivers to ford. Along the final approach and at the hut though, this location becomes an all-consuming focus. Soaring mountain walls, pocked with snowfields and glaciers, great peaks, including Mt D'Archiac (2875m), an intimidating snow and ice pyramid, rear above the tussock flats. The hut is beside the Forbes River and commands viewing angles both up and down river. It has been an important waypoint for generations of trans-alpinists, climbers and hunters all seeking adventure among the hidden corners of this wild estate.

Grade Difficult **Time** 2 days.

28

Welcome Flat Hut,

Westland Tai Poutini National Park

A thermal wonderland nestled among
New Zealand's highest mountains.

BY SAM HARRISON

The hut is hidden deep in the shadow of the Sierra Range at the foot of the Southern Alps, and, with its associated hot spring, it has long been a favourite with walkers of all kinds. In summer, southern rātā turn the valley into a blaze of red; in winter the surrounding mountains are snow-covered – making a dip in the hot pools even more irresistible. The track up the Copland River to Welcome Flat follows the vestiges of an old bridle road which was built in the early 20th century. The plan was to create a tourist route over to The Hermitage at Mt Cook. From Architects Creek it climbs steadily until the smell of sulphur fills the air and the spacious 35-bunk hut comes into sight.

Grade Easy-moderate **Time** 7hr.

→

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SAM HARRISON

Mueller Hut is an accessible abnove-the-bushline destination

29

Mueller Hut,
Aoraki Mount Cook National Park

Drink your morning coffee on the deck while gazing at glaciers hanging opposite.

BY HAZEL PHILLIPS

MUELLER HUT

Mueller Hut the Fifth. It sounds royal, and is indeed a regal affair – the fifth incarnation of this historic hut. A red shed alpine barn, it's nestled at 1800m on the Sealy Range at Mt Cook and provides an accessible above-the-bushline experience for snow and ice lovers. The hut offers epic views to glaciers, sheer rock faces, ice formations, and Aoraki / Mt Cook. Watch out for Mount Cook lilies, gentians and buttercups, and consider a side trip to the easy peak of Mt Ollivier (1933m), Sir Ed's first summit.

Grade Moderate
Time 3-4hr.

ROB BROWN

Main Huxley Forks Hut

30

Mataketake Hut,
South Westland

If the views aren't on, at least there's the hut library.

BY HAZEL PHILLIPS

Built in 2021 thanks to a bequest from adventurer and conservationist Andy Dennis, this hut offers excellent views across South Westland and wonderful travel over tussocky tops dotted with alpine tarns. But if the West Coast weather doesn't cooperate, there's the hut's well-stocked library, a specially constructed shelf with Andy's own book collection. It's possible to see peaks such as Hooker and Dechen, and on a sunny day there's plenty of alluring alpine swimming spots. The hut has also opened up a new route on the Mataketake tops, using the historic Mica Mine Track and Haast to Paringa Cattle Track for access.

Grade Moderate **Time** 8-9hr.

31

Main Huxley Forks Hut,
Ruataniwha Conservation Park

An ideal destination for family tramping.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Huxley Forks occupies a beech-fringed clearing with high mountains rising on three sides, in the heart of Kā Tiritiri o te Moana/the Southern Alps. Access to the Huxley, one of Canterbury's loveliest valleys, is from Lake Ōhau Road. Tramp up the Hopkins Valley, past Monument Hut, before branching into the more secluded Huxley, through beech forest and over flats, to the forks of the Huxley River south and north branches. At this river junction are two huts, a small two-bunker, and the six-bunk Main Huxley Forks Hut. It's worth spending a couple of nights here and exploring the two branches. The north branch leads to Brodrick Hut and pass, while the south branch leads to South Huxley Biv.

Grade Moderate **Time** 7–9hr.

32

Stafford Hut,
West Coast

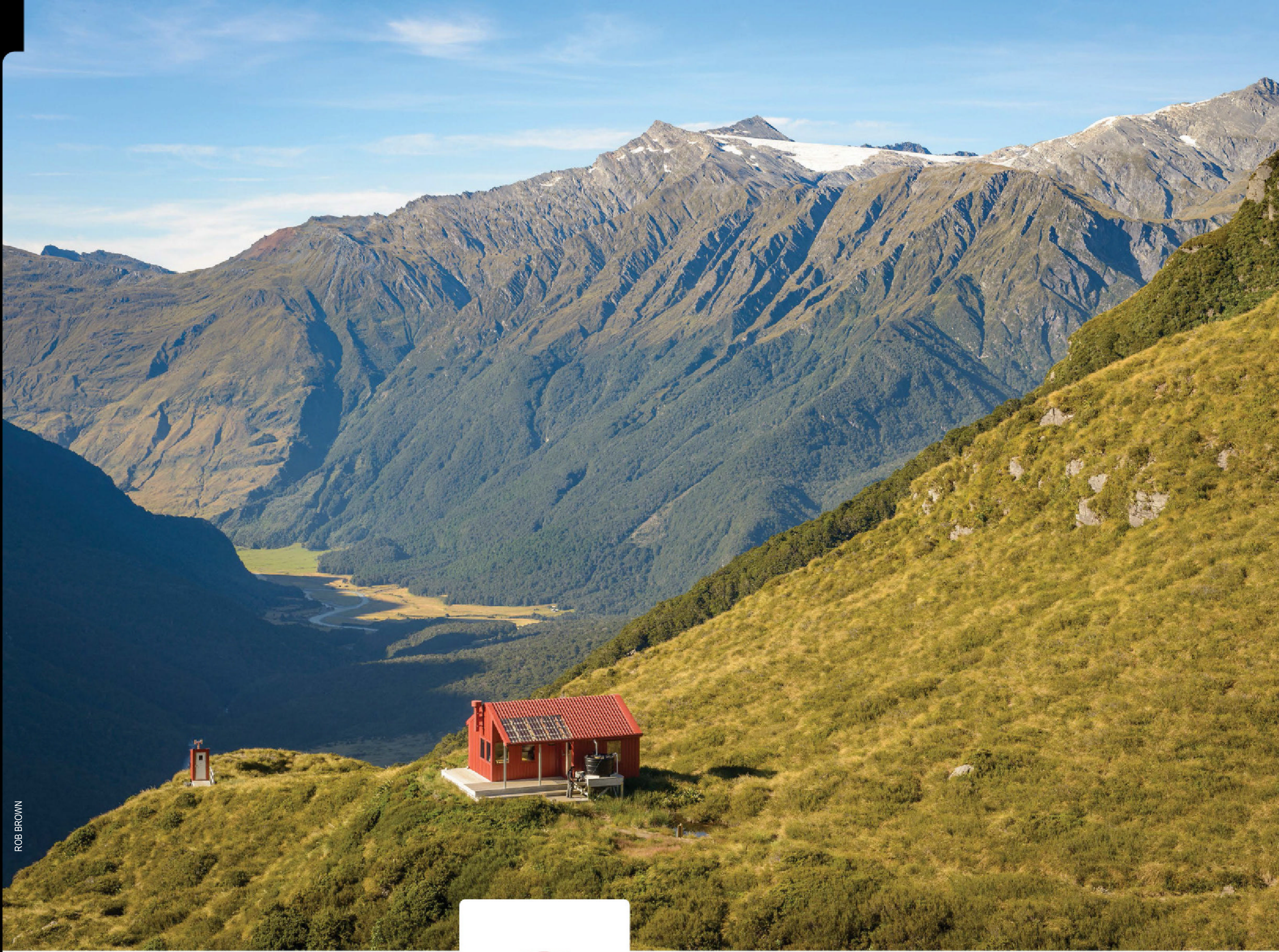
A rainforest escape on the wild and rugged coast of South Westland.

BY SAM HARRISON

Stafford Hut is nestled underneath the Stafford Range in dense temperate rainforest with the Tasman Sea roaring close by. It's the perfect place to escape civilisation. Built in 2010, the six-bunk hut is a spot to reconnect with nature, whether enjoying the surrounding bush or collecting kaimoana off the nearby rocks. The three hour walk to the hut from Jacksons Bay feels delightfully wild and is often spent splashing in rivers and streams that cut through the dense bush of the area.

Grade Moderate **Time** 3hr.

→



ROB BROWN

Liverpool Hut holds a kingly seat above the Matukituki Valley

33

Siberia Hut,
Mt Aspiring National Park

A firm favourite on a classic transalpine tramp.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

If names were anything to go by, Siberia Hut, nestled underneath the looming peaks of Mt Awful and Mt Dreadful, would not be on anyone's bucket list. Yet this 20-bunk hut is a firm favourite. It faces north just on the edge of the beech forest, and is a superbly situated stopping point on the Gillespie Pass circuit. It's also a worthwhile destination in its own right for those looking for a spot to soak up the Southern Alps. Just three hours north lies Crucible Lake, a spectacular glacial cauldron often with its own icebergs.

Grade Moderate **Time** 8-12hr.

34

Liverpool Hut,
Mt Aspiring National Park

Valley views on high.

BY MATTHEW CATTIN

Matukituki Valley is one of Mt Aspiring National Park's finest taonga. The broad glacial wonderland, with its golden tussock and glittering riverbed, is a trampers' paradise. The only thing better than walking in the valley is climbing above it. Liverpool Hut holds a kingly seat around 500m above the valley floor, and it's a three-hour slog from Aspiring Hut. From the hut, the Bonar Glacier and Mt Aspiring dominate the skyline, though with 360-degree mountain views it's hard to know where to look. The toilet, perched on the edge of the void, is perhaps the most spectacular in New Zealand. If the curious kea don't put you off, conducting your business with the door open is a must.

Grade Difficult
Time 6-8hr.

35

Routeburn Flats Hut,
Mt Aspiring National Park

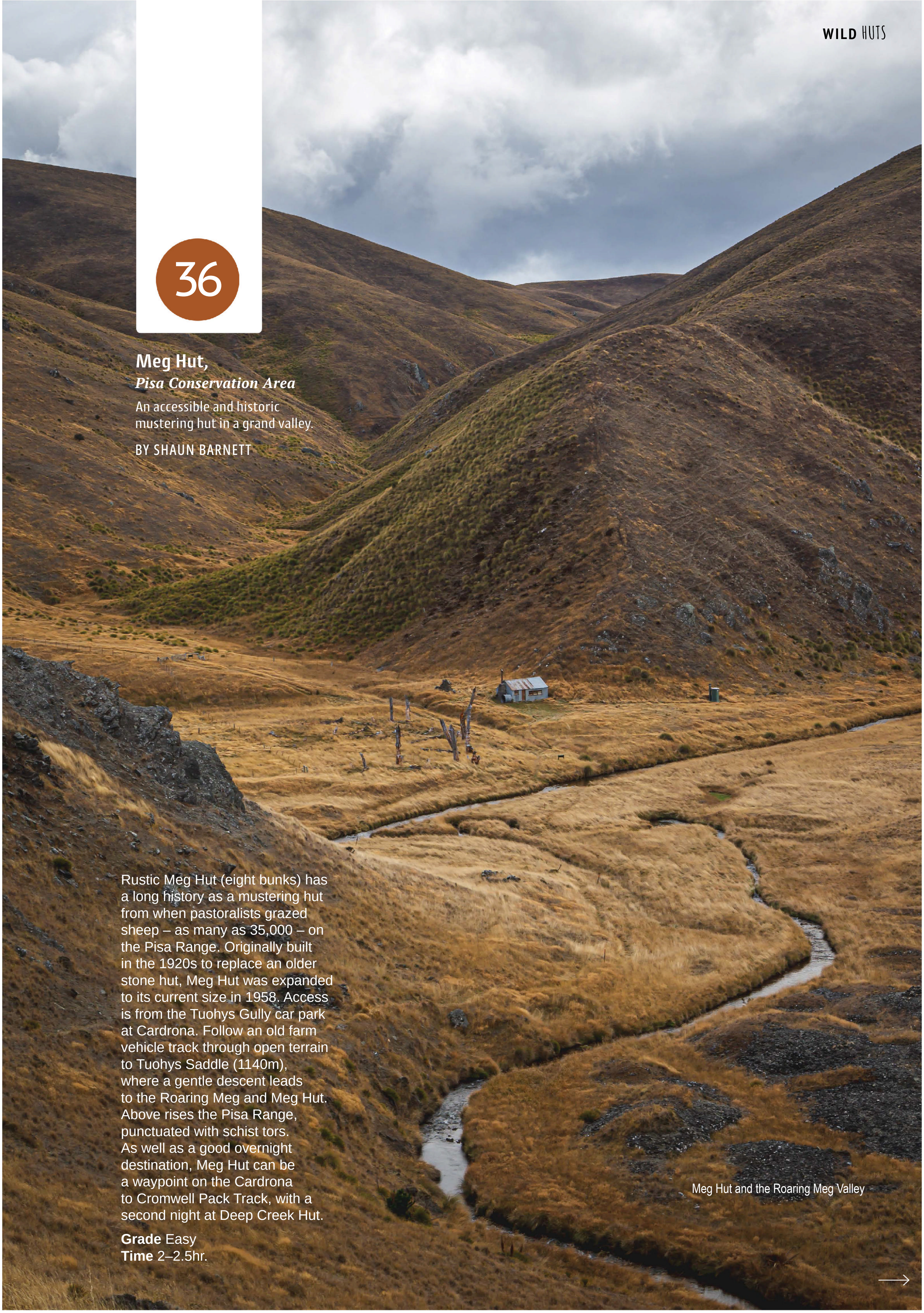
Spacious and tranquil, this is a place to absorb the grandeur of Mt Aspiring National Park.

BY PAT BARRETT

The hut is set in an amphitheatre of mountain fastness beneath the Southern Alps and the bastions of the Humboldt Range. A wide, grassy river flat gives the Route Burn pause from its boisterous path through the valleys, and here is the hut. It's easily a rival for the breathtaking scenery of either Lake MacKenzie Hut or Routeburn Falls Hut. But then this is a Great Walk and one which you might expect every waypoint to provoke a sense of awe and amazement. The hut windows frame the peaks of the Route Burn's North Branch, especially Mt Somnus (2293m) – an alluring snow summit.

Grade Easy **Time** 3hr.

SAM HARRISON



36

Meg Hut,

Pisa Conservation Area

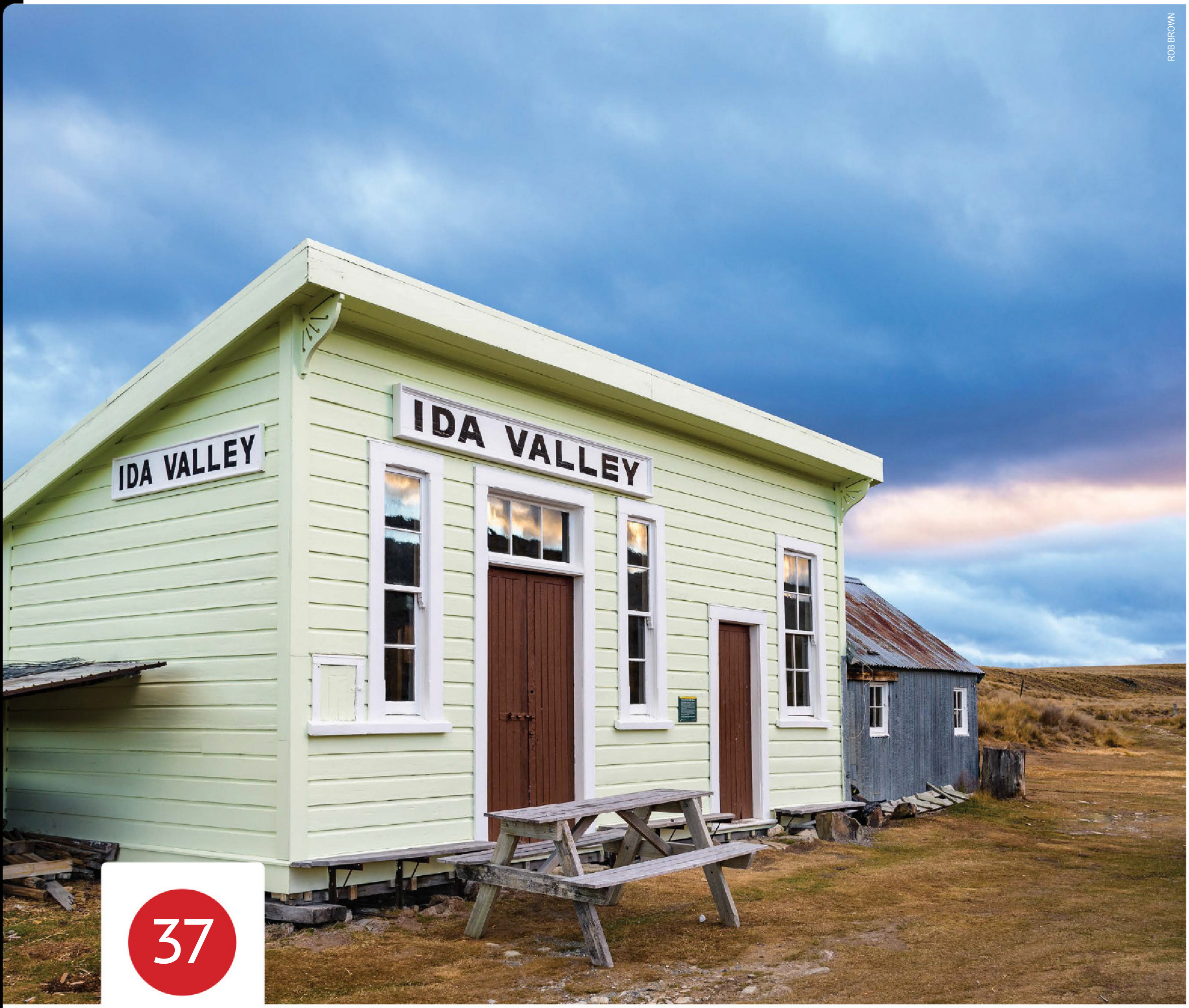
An accessible and historic mustering hut in a grand valley.

BY SHAUN BARNETT

Rustic Meg Hut (eight bunks) has a long history as a mustering hut from when pastoralists grazed sheep – as many as 35,000 – on the Pisa Range. Originally built in the 1920s to replace an older stone hut, Meg Hut was expanded to its current size in 1958. Access is from the Tuohys Gully car park at Cardrona. Follow an old farm vehicle track through open terrain to Tuohys Saddle (1140m), where a gentle descent leads to the Roaring Meg and Meg Hut. Above rises the Pisa Range, punctuated with schist tors. As well as a good overnight destination, Meg Hut can be a waypoint on the Cardrona to Cromwell Pack Track, with a second night at Deep Creek Hut.

Grade Easy
Time 2–2.5hr.

Meg Hut and the Roaring Meg Valley



ROB BROWN

An old railway station is now a 12 bunk hut

37

Ida Railway Hut,

Oteake Conservation Park

One of the more unique huts in New Zealand with an interesting back story.

BY ROB BROWN

When the decision was made to decommission the Central Otago Rail line in the late 1980s, farmer Laurie Inder of the Mt Ida Syndicate purchased a couple of the old railway stations, one of which ended up being dragged by bulldozer all the way onto the middle of the Ida Plateau to be attached to an existing musterer's hut. It was restored in 2013 by DOC, and is now a comfortable 12-bunk hut inside an original piece of 1920s New Zealand Railways architecture in the most improbable location. The old coal range is still in working order.

Grade Moderate (best visited by 4WD as the track is rough).

38

Lake Roe Hut,

Fiordland National Park

Stunning location surrounded by lakes and open tussock tops.

BY ROB BROWN

This hut is usually visited as part of the Dusky Track. It's a great place to spend a rest day exploring the open tops, wandering up to Lake Roe itself (20min from the hut) or taking a full day to climb Tamatea Peak. Arriving on the track via either the aptly named Pleasant Range, or up the Hauroko Burn, spending a couple of nights at Lake Roe is often everyone's highlight on this challenging 8-9 day tramp. The hut is the standard Lands and Survey design unique to Fiordland National Park.

Grade Moderate-difficult **Time** 2 days.

39

Yankee River Hut,
Rakiura National Park

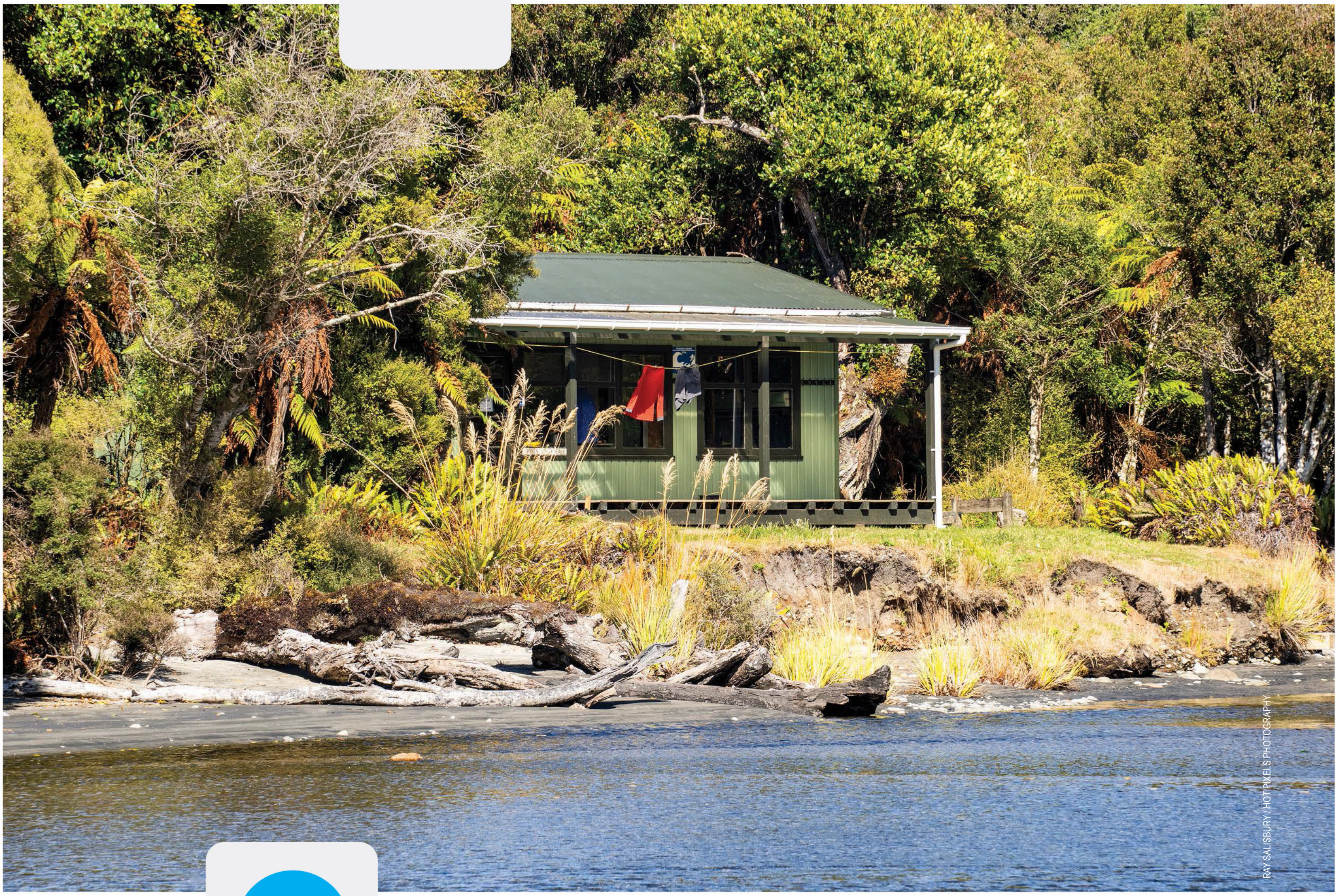
A hut that feels like it's teetering on the edge of the world.

BY RAY SALISBURY

Yankee River empties into the ocean at a small, rocky beach at the northernmost tip of Stewart Island. The hut squats on a shelf above the lagoon, backed by tropical forest – a great place to recover after climbing Mt Anglem. It's also where kiwi can be seen. Quiet isolation and a remote wilderness is what makes this corner of the country so special.

Grade Moderate **Time** 3–4 days.

Yankee River Hut



RAY SALISBURY / HOTPIXELS PHOTOGRAPHY

40

Mason Bay Hut,
Rakiura National Park

Amazing dune landscapes and a better than average chance of seeing kiwi.

BY ROB BROWN

As a building, Mason Bay Hut is unremarkable, yet it's hard to beat the location and experience. The hut is an old design that has been messed around with, but it still works, and is a welcome refuge when tramping the Southern or North West Circuits.The surrounding population of kiwi seems to be doing better than ever.

It's pretty special drifting off to sleep hearing them whistling in the scrub and kānuka forest. It's simply a great place to be for a couple of days and to take in everything the landscape and nature has to offer.

Grade Easy **Time** 1-2 days.

Day of reckoning

RABBIT PASS IS WORLD FAMOUS IN NEW ZEALAND FOR ITS STUNNING RIVER VALLEYS, BEECH FOREST AND THE TREACHEROUS WATERFALL FACE.

by
SAM HARRISON

Wilderness
WALK 1200km
56km

Two powerful alpine waterfalls surround me as I hang several hundred metres in the air, high above a picturesque valley in the Southern Alps. My hands are tightly clasped around a pathetic clump of snow tussock, my feet tucked into earthen toeholds. This is the Waterfall Face on the Rabbit Pass Route, and I am reconsidering my life choices... but I get ahead of myself.

This story really starts with two chance meetings with an American backpacker, Katie, in different areas of Fiordland. Fast-forward a couple of years and together we decide to do the classic crossing from the Makarora to the East Mātukituki over Rabbit Pass. The route is infamous: tell anyone about it and the first thing they'll ask is, "How did you find the Waterfall Face?"

We saved a day's walk up the Wilkin River and a potentially dangerous crossing of the Makarora by booking a ride with Wilkin River Jets. The ride was like a journey back in time as cows were quickly replaced with ancient beech forests, the river a deep blue highway into the wilderness. On disembarking, one last word of caution from the jetboat driver: "We'll be here every day if you decide you don't want to tackle the Waterfall Face."

We smiled and thanked her, wondering…

First stop was Kerin Forks Hut where we signed the hut book and set out under the midday sun up the Wilkin Valley. I was pleasantly surprised by how good the track was as we walked through the beech forest. However, we came unstuck at the edge of a clearing where we lost the track markers. The choice was dipping between house-sized boulders by the river or a steep climb through the bush. I chose the former, Katie the latter. I gingerly plunged my boot into the knee-deep eddy on the side of the river before scrambling up the sandy bank on the other side. I then rock-hopped along the river to the planned meeting point with Katie at a creek that flowed off Mt Jumbo. Katie was waiting, leaning on a boulder while I hauled my way up the steep stream bed to join her.

An impressive 400m waterfall, seen on the approach to Rabbit Pass, flows off the slopes beneath Mt Taurus ›

ABOVE :Top Forks Hut is not one but two huts!; BELOW: A decent rock bivvy makes for a comfortable night on Waterfall Flat

From here was a rude 100m climb to Jumboland. A hut once stood here, built by the Otago Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club, but it was removed in the 1980s when Top Forks Hut was built.

Mts Arne and Aeolus watch over the entrance to the Wonderland Valley, and, on the far side of Jumboland, another rude climb awaited before a descent to the upper flats.

As we crossed the flats, a yellow Piper Cub swooped down and landed. We crossed the river to the 'airstrip' – a relatively flat section of low grass – and exchanged greetings with the passengers before continuing up the valley. Our route cut to the north-east away from the marked track, following a hole between pockets of forest and scrub, then rejoining the river on the far side. By staying on the true left we avoided climbing Pt710 and made excellent time to Top Forks Hut.

The following morning ominous cloud transformed into sheets of rain. We weren't bothered – we were dry and warm in the cosy older-style hut, which had recently had some TLC and featured a nice open fireplace. The rain ceased by midday and we detoured up the North Branch Wilkin Track, taking care when crossing the river as it was running much higher than the day before.

After climbing through an ancient moraine wall, we emerged from the beech forest beside Lake Diana, from where it was easy going along a boardwalk to Lucidus Lake which nestles beneath commanding mountains with Greek mythological names: Pollux, Castor and Apollo. We returned to the hut to collect our gear before heading up the steep South Branch Wilkin Track in the direction of Waterfall Flat and Rabbit Pass.

It was a quick climb through the beech forest before sidling above Snow Bridge Gorge on a narrow scrubby track. Beneath the spur of Mt Twilight this turned straight upwards, making us clamber up trickling mountain streams. A 200m climb gave way to a sidle before we reached Waterfall Flat. The track markers evaporated at this point and we did our best to cross the grassy flats, finding every hole between the tussocks as we did so. After about a kilometre, beneath where the words 'Waterfall Flat' are marked on the topo map, there's a large boulder with a cairn on top. Underneath we found a cosy rock bivvy fashioned by river stones and waratahs, a perfect place for the night in a spectacular spot.

The grass was frosty and our boots were frozen when we awoke on our 'day of reckoning', so we agreed to wait for the Waterfall Face to thaw out. We set out mid-morning under a bluebird sky and after 15 minutes reached the lower slopes of the face, where we picked up a line of orange snow poles.

Near the top of the face a sidle to the left is required, and any fall would likely be fatal

Step by step, and fully focused, we made our way up a gut and onto a spur, then a traverse back to the left over an exposed slope. One slip would be fatal.

"Oh boy, here goes nothing," Katie said as she led up the face, which steepened quickly, the route cutting diagonally to the right through some slick rock bluffs. I just prayed that the tussock I clung to would hold.

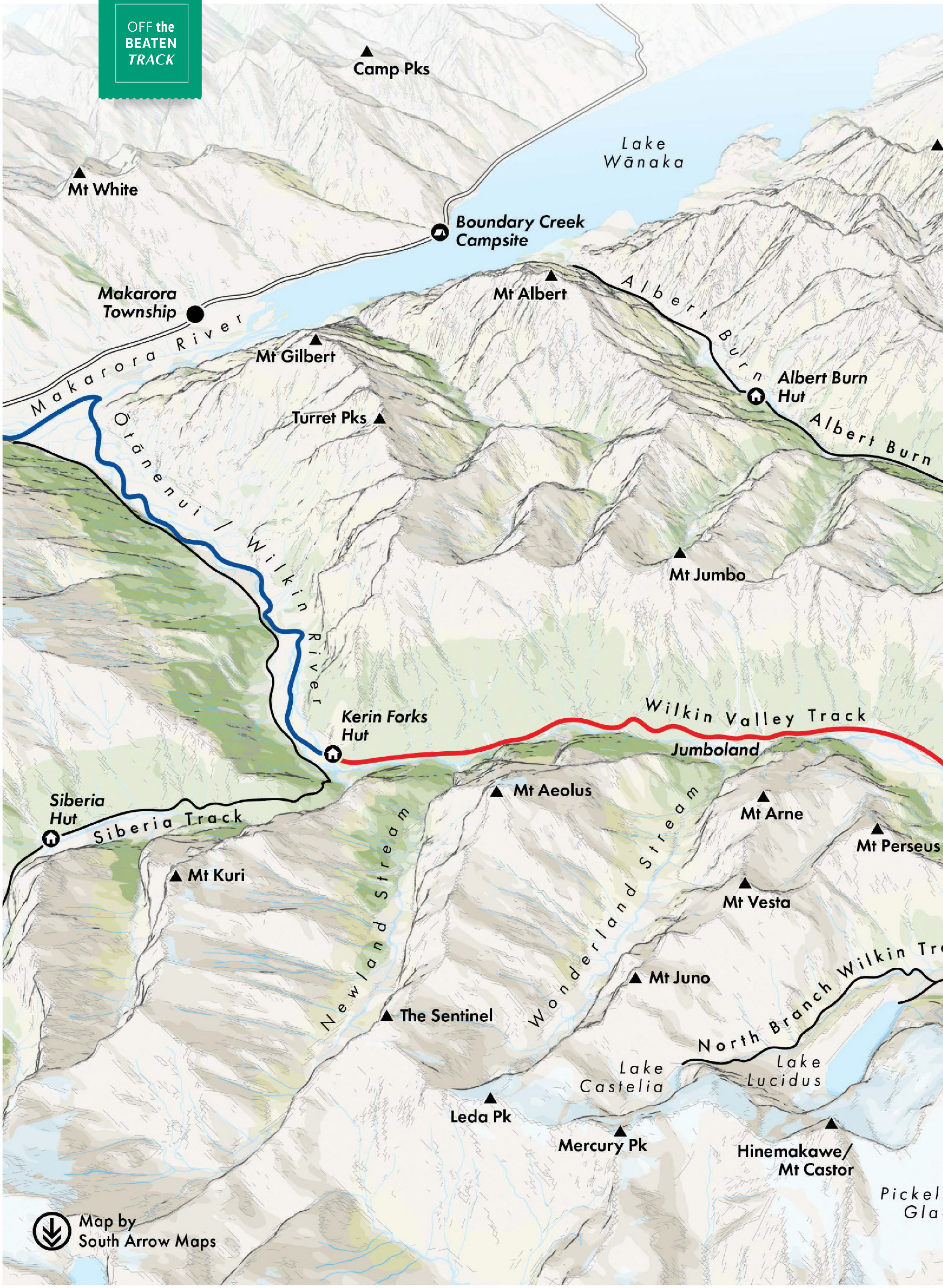
Step by step, and fully focused, we made our way up the face. Up a gut and onto a bit of a spur, then a traverse back to the left over an exposed slope. One slip would be fatal. As we came over the lip a wave of relief washed through me, quickly followed by the thought: 'I do not want to go down that!'

In front was a gentle valley dominated at the far end by Pickelhaube, the pointy mountain resembling the spiked helmets once worn by the German military. The South Wilkin flowed lazily down the valley.

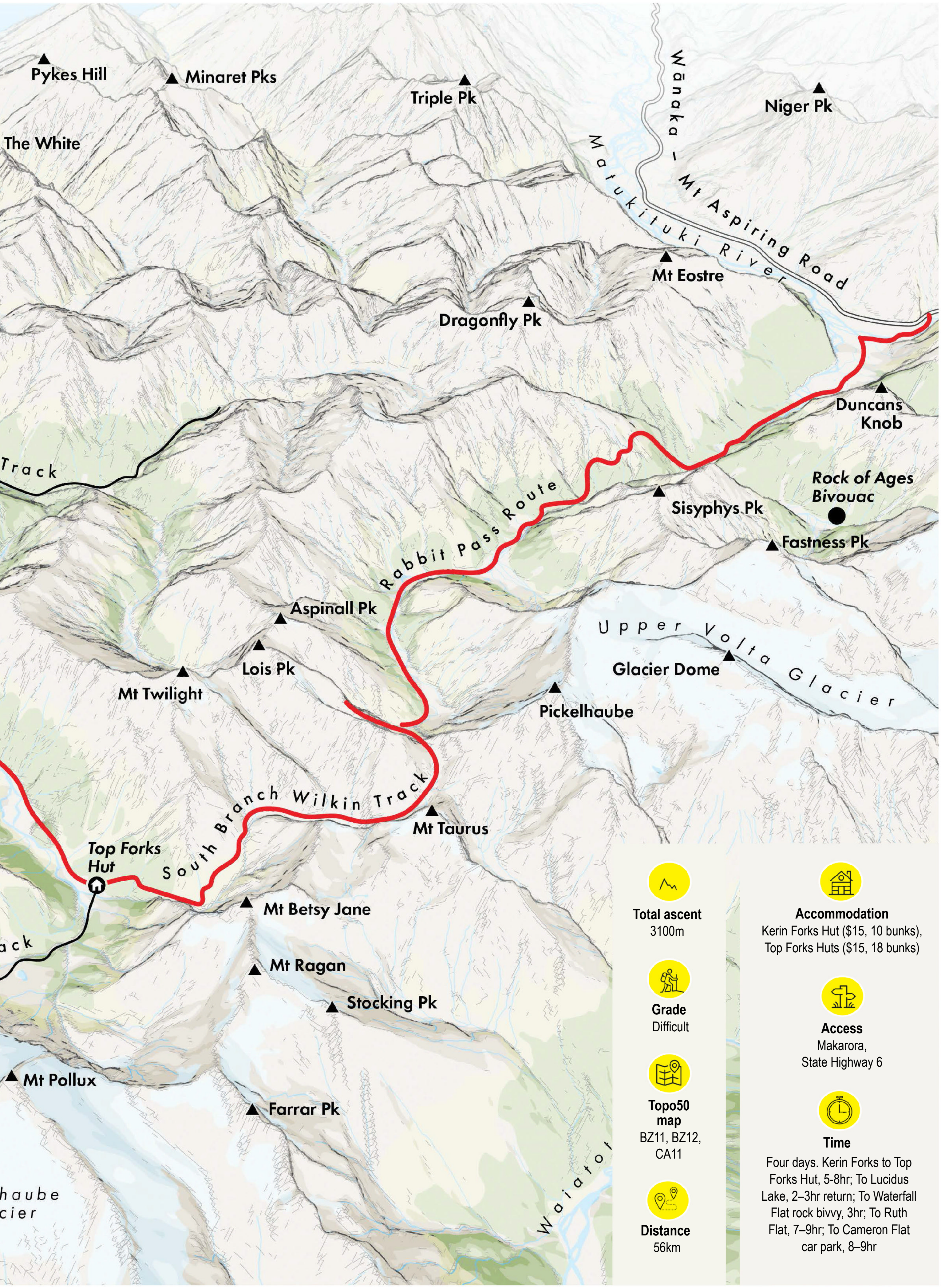
We made a quick dash to Pearson Saddle where we became the focus of a circus of nine kea. They were curious enough, but lost interest as we continued up the valley towards Rabbit Pass.

The pass itself is unspectacular, but just past it one gets a 500m view directly down to the East Mātukituki. We were under no illusion that all the hard work had been done, and dreaded the next section almost as much as the Waterfall Face.

The route goes along a ledge leading to Lois Peak. After climbing 200m, we felt we were going the wrong way. Weren't we meant to be descending? A large orange triangle and standard marked our point of descent. Here, a chink in the bluffs led to a 30m descent down schist with the consistency of dry Weet-Bix, a downclimb that *Moir's Guide* understatedly suggests 'some might find awkward'. For the second time that day, I was clinging to subpar handholds, wondering what I was doing with my life. A fall here would be less severe than on the Waterfall Face, but the holds were worse and ice made life awkward. However, by taking things slowly, we made it down to the schist scree, bodies intact but perhaps minds scarred.


Camp Pks
Lake Wānaka
Mt White
Boundary Creek Campsite
Makarora Township
Mt Albert
Albert Burn
Makarora River
Mt Gilbert
Albert Burn Hut
Albert Burn
Turret Pks
Ōtānenui / Wilkin River
Mt Jumbo
Kerin Forks Hut
Wilkin Valley Track
Jumboland
Siberia Hut
Siberia Track
Mt Aeolus
Mt Arne
Mt Perseus
Mt Kuri
Newland Stream
Wonderland Stream
Mt Vesta
Mt Juno
North Branch Wilkin Tr
The Sentinel
Lake Castelia
Lake Lucidus
Leda Pk
Mercury Pk
Hinemakawe/ Mt Castor
Pickel
Gla

Map by South Arrow Maps


Pykes Hill
Minaret Pks
Triple Pk
Wānaka – Mt Aspiring Road
Niger Pk
The White
Matukituki River
Mt Eostre
Dragonfly Pk
Duncans Knob
Track
Rock of Ages Bivouac
Sisyphys Pk
Rabbit Pass Route
Fastness Pk
Aspinall Pk
Upper Volta Glacier
Lois Pk
Glacier Dome
Mt Twilight
Pickelhaube
South Branch Wilkin Track
Mt Taurus
Top Forks Hut
Mt Betsy Jane
ack
Mt Ragan
Stocking Pk
Mt Pollux
Farrar Pk
haube
cier
Waiatot

Total ascent
3100m

Grade
Difficult

Topo50 map
BZ11, BZ12, CA11

Distance
56km

Accommodation
Kerin Forks Hut ($15, 10 bunks), Top Forks Huts ($15, 18 bunks)

Access
Makarora, State Highway 6

Time
Four days. Kerin Forks to Top Forks Hut, 5-8hr; To Lucidus Lake, 2–3hr return; To Waterfall Flat rock bivvy, 3hr; To Ruth Flat, 7–9hr; To Cameron Flat car park, 8–9hr

Travel down the East Mātukituki is easy going, with a few chilly river crossings

It was then plain sailing down scree slopes and through alpine scrub until reaching one of the tributaries of the East Mātukituki. We powered down the initial boulder-strewn section of river until the open flats of the East Mātukituki Valley. This place is magnificent; ice-capped mountains framing waterfalls, beech-clad slopes and the river running between deep blue pools that would be inviting on a hot day. Lower down the valley, we crossed the river before emerging onto Ruth Flat, where we found a perfect campsite on the true left of the Mātukituki. We set up our tents and settled in for the night.

Next day we walked for half an hour along mellow river flats before leaving the river as it plunged into the Bledisloe (Bloody-slow) Gorge. Next, it was beech forest and a steady climbing sidle before crossing a deep boulder-strewn ravine. The track then veered upwards – the gorge's nickname being all too apparent. When the climb relented we found ourselves in an enchanted forest, a chorus of birdsong echoing through the treetops. Shuffling along narrow ledges, we passed waterfalls and forest pools before negotiating a series of small bluffs.

Finally, we broke from the bushline to views of Ruth Flat to the north, Aspiring Flat to the east and Cameron Flat to the south. Cloud poured over from the Bonar Glacier, gushing like a perpetual wave between Popes Nose – what a great name for a mountain – and Mt Avalanche.

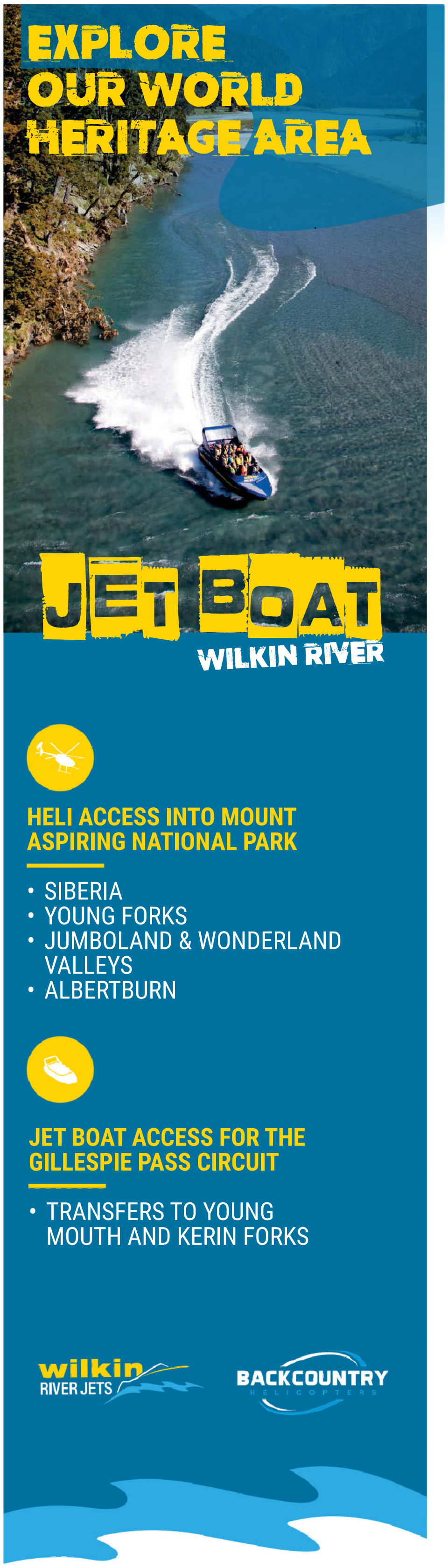
The track to Junction Flat wove through a ghoulish forest with dead trees frozen and half-submerged in the landscape. This changed to living beech trees that provided much-appreciated shade from the sun. Soon we again reached the East Mātukituki and crossed an impressive three-wire bridge over water that moments before had been making a chaotic descent down the gorge.

Camping spots abounded at the flat but we pushed on, fording the Kitchener River before starting towards Cameron Flat. The track undulated up and over slips and other obstacles, carving a path through lush beech forest. About halfway, with the aid of a wire, we crossed a waterfall that had worn down the huge rock over which it ran. (After heavy rain this can become impassable forcing parties to spend an extra night in the bush). From here we followed the river closely, admiring reflections of Fog Peak in the river's slow-moving pools.

We decided to camp on the edge of the park at Glacier Burn, where ice melt flowing from an impressive canyon brings frozen winds. Then, it was a simple hour's walk across pasture with one final river crossing before we reached the road.

Rabbit Pass deserves its infamous reputation. For the most part though it is easy walking in pleasant wild valleys, punctuated by two difficult, technical sections on either side of the pass. These are quite do-able if you have the right experience, devote your complete attention and have good weather. W

DOWNLOAD Find the map and route notes for this trip at **www.wildernessmag.co.nz**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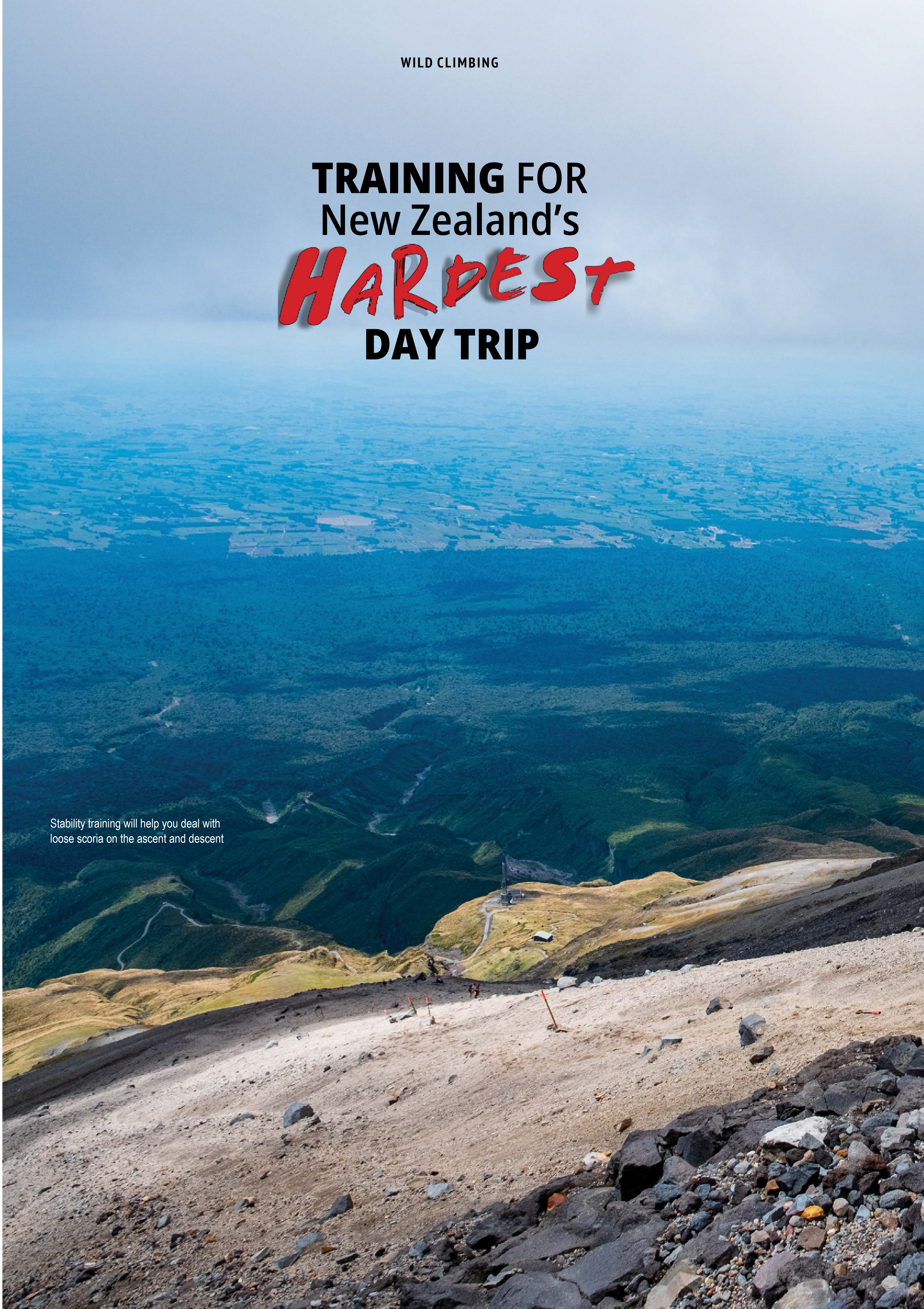
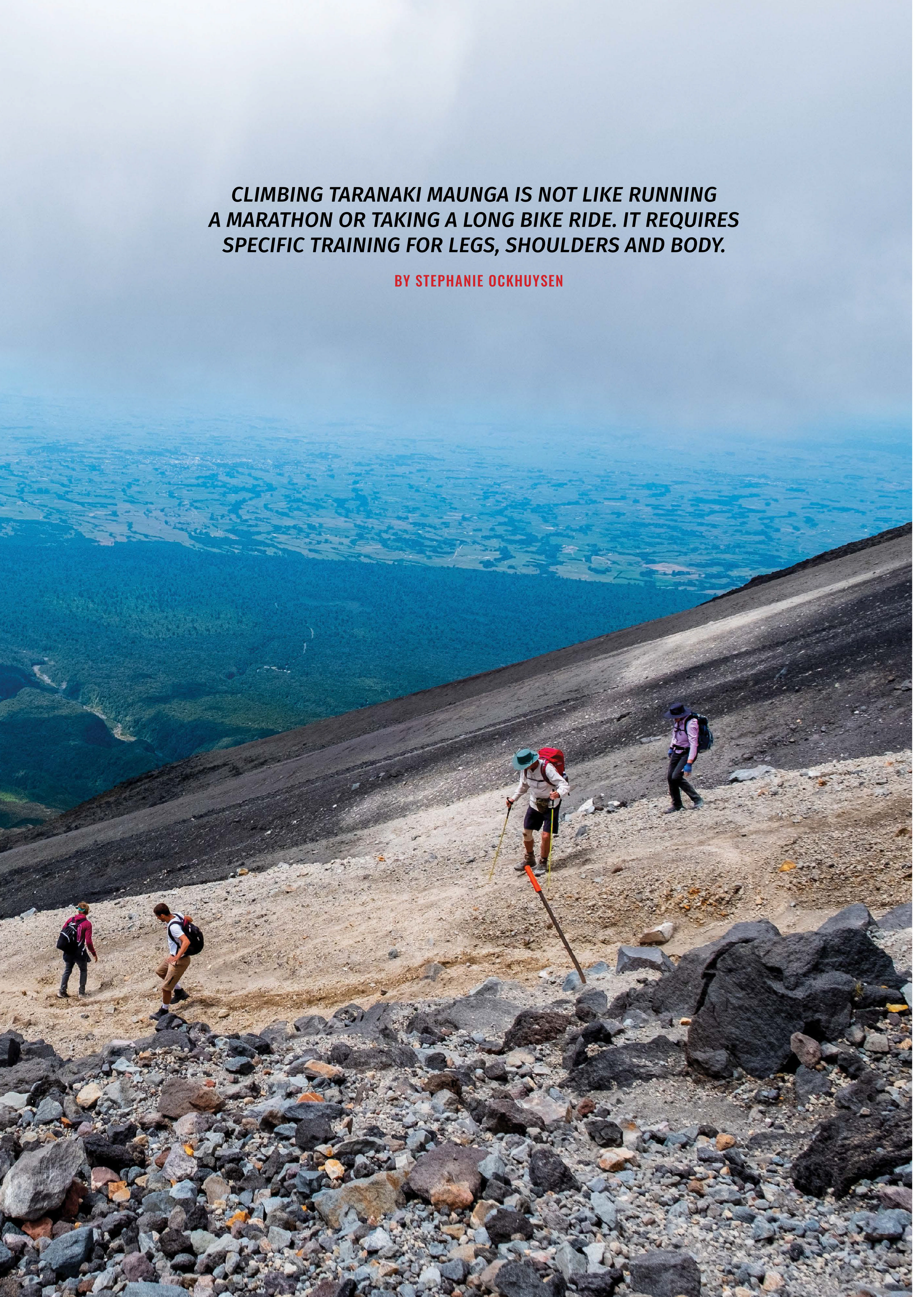
TRAINING FOR New Zealand's HARDEST DAY TRIP



Stability training will help you deal with loose scoria on the ascent and descent

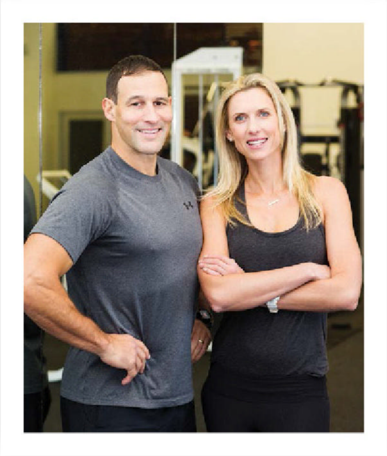


CLIMBING TARANAKI MAUNGA IS NOT LIKE RUNNING A MARATHON OR TAKING A LONG BIKE RIDE. IT REQUIRES SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR LEGS, SHOULDERS AND BODY.

BY STEPHANIE OCKHUYSEN

Rob Needs says a vital component of training for the climb is to stay hydrated

Micah Lindsay-Brown training for the climb will mean the difference between just doing it and cherishing the memory



It's one of New Zealand's hardest day trips and training for Taranaki Maunga's 2518m summit is not to be underestimated.

It's a 6.3km hike to the top, and it's steep and strenuous, taking up to six hours to ascend and four hours to descend.

According to a top Taranaki personal trainer, preparation and training is key to how much you'll enjoy the trip.

And there's a difference between just being fit and being mountain fit.

"You can be fit and strong but still struggle with the mountain because you haven't done the repetition of climbing," Micah Lindsay-Brown of White Wolf Health and Fitness says. "If you were a hill runner, that's going to have some good carry over but if you're a road runner or a biker on flat ground you have to change your training."

Vital to avoiding injury is stability training, Lindsay-Brown says.

Stability training prepares your body for the uneven footing on the mountain and is especially important for the scoria section.

Lindsay-Brown does this with a balance ball and different exercises using it. She recently trained two women for the mountain and says calf and shoulder strength were a huge part of the process.

"In the past when they started their training they had issues with shin splints or calves or quads or neck pain because of packs, so my job was to get them really strong in those areas, so we did a lot of shoulder work, which is surprising but it really helps."

Lindsay-Brown says always go for practise hikes in the footwear you will wear on the climb so your feet are used to them before the big day.

"Practise lots of little climbs. It builds confidence and the head game is a big part of it," she says. "You don't just want to do it, you want to cherish it as a memory."

A few years ago, long time Taranaki guide Rob Needs polled his friends to see what was harder: climbing the mountain or running a marathon.

> **PRACTISE LOTS OF LITTLE CLIMBS.** It builds confidence and the head game is a big part of it.
>
> *Micah Lindsay-Brown*

“All said a marathon is harder, but it’s up there with maybe a half marathon,” he says.

Needs, who runs Top Guides and a mountain shuttle service, says people should find the biggest, most gnarly and unattractive hills they can and climb them in preparation.

He mostly employs people to guide to the summit now but estimates he has summited “more than 20 but less than 100” times.

“I like to tell people the allure has gone but the truth is I’d have to put in 12 months training to be able to do it now,” he says.

Despite not being up the mountain as much these days, Needs has a vast knowledge and respect for it. Other than getting fit climbing horrendous hills, he says an important part of training is hydration, which starts before you even step foot on the mountain.

“You should be peeing as clear as you can the night before,” Needs says.

For the climb itself, Needs says to take three-litres of water and go prepared as for a day at the beach and a day at the ski field.

While the most popular month to climb is February, Needs says the end of March is the best time because the days are shorter and the intensity of the heat has gone.

“Covering your skin is the best way to protect yourself as exposed skin will get roasted,” he says. “I’ve seen the most insanely burnt people coming off the maunga.”

He recommends investing in sturdy, well-fitting footwear, pole, and gloves for rock scrambling protection.

Doing research on the cultural aspects of Taranaki Maunga should also be part of training, says Needs.

In Māori culture, the mountain is considered tupuna (an ancestor) so out of respect climbers should not stand on the highest point, known as the summit stone, as this is considered the same as standing on the head of an ancestor. No cooking, toileting, or camping should take place in the summit area either.

“The disrespect shown to our tupuna is immense – some on purpose, some on misunderstanding.”

The biggest mistake Needs sees people make is underestimating the mountain.

Climbers often make the mistake of relaxing when they get to the top but most accidents happen on the descent, he says.

He urged climbers to be careful and turn around if they needed to.

“Getting to 2518m is not compulsory, getting home to your whanau is compulsory.”

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Chorizo basil beans

Chorizo is a tasty addition to any tramping pack. It can be eaten as a snack, or crisped up in a pan and tossed through pasta, grains or salads for a smokey-flavoured protein hit.

BY IZZIE THOMPSON

THE INGREDIENTS in this recipe can easily be split to accommodate two people for dinner and a different lunch - not so much the can of beans, but half of the chorizo, greens, pesto and parmesan would be welcome additions to a lunchtime wrap.

PROFILES:

Time: 15 minutes

Serves: 4

Cost: $20

INGREDIENTS:

4 chorizo sticks

1 eggplant

1 small broccoli

400g can cannellini/butter beans

1 bag spinach/green leaves

130g tub pesto

100g bag shaved parmesan

Oil

Salt and pepper

METHOD:

Drain and rinse the can of beans.

Slice the eggplant into thick, and the chorizo into thin rounds. Heat oil in a frying pan and add the eggplant, cooking over a high heat for ten minutes until the sides begin to collapse and the centres go gooey. Flip the pieces after five minutes. If there's room in the pan add the chorizo at the five-minute mark as well. (If not, cook separately once the eggplant is done.) Very finely chop up the broccoli until it's about rice-sized.

Distribute the spinach, beans and broccoli onto plates or bowls and dollop some pesto on top, then stir to combine.

Place eggplant and chorizo pieces on top and finish off the rest of the pesto, sprinkling salt, pepper and parmesan over the lot.

NECO WIERINGA

Play the veto card if you think the situation needs more consideration or discussion

THE EXPERT HALO

The role heuristics play in our decision-making can lead to dangerous situations outdoors.

BY REBEKAH WILSON

HEURISTICS PLAY a critical role in our lives every day, providing mental shortcuts that help our brains make decisions faster and more efficiently. This is generally a good thing, but in a harsh and unforgiving environment, making decisions through mental shortcuts can lead to a dangerous trap.

Experts, they know what's right. Right? But what if you've only assumed they are the expert? That's at the heart of the heuristic trap known as 'expert halo': you defer to the perceived expert and stop making or contributing to the decision-making process.

Most trampers have been in a group that has a perceived leader who, if not calling the shots, is influencing them. Why are they the perceived leader? Is it because they think they know it all, are overly confident in their opinion, or just the loudest in the group? Those are not sound reasons to let one person make all the decisions. Or, maybe, they're more experienced than you so you automatically feel they're in a better position to lead the group?

Imagine you're out on a tramping trip for the weekend with a group of friends. One of them has taken charge, although you're unsure whether the group decided that, or if it just happened. You may have been on a trip with them before, or not, but you know they've done more tramping than you, so everyone figures they're more experienced and better skilled for the job.

They're keen to tackle a river crossing, but you and the rest of the group aren't feeling so sure. However, they are adamant that it's 'no big deal', and you think, 'They know better than me, they're the expert, they have more experience'. So you keep quiet, or your input isn't heard, and you get ready to cross.

GOOD LEADERS FACILITATE CONVERSATION AND GROUP DECISION-MAKING, THEY DON'T DOMINATE IT.

It's common to assume our peers know more than we do about certain topics, until proven otherwise. It's unfortunate when that proof comes with consequences, especially if severe.

To avoid such scenarios, ensure your group has a UN Security Council veto-vote policy. If one person isn't comfortable with doing something, that feedback should be welcomed and acted on; play the veto card if you think the situation needs more consideration or discussion.

Set this up in advance so all group members understand they will be encouraged to be open about their thoughts and feelings on the trip. This will make it far more likely that concerns will be heard, and that a robust and inclusive decision-making process will prevail. Talk through everyone's strengths, weaknesses, and competencies. You may find the 'expert' is not necessarily that experienced. You may even discover some unknown talents of your own that could be handy in a pinch.

Having a leader in a group can be a good thing. But good leadership isn't a dictatorship. Key safety decisions should not be made solely by them. Importantly, everyone should feel comfortable voicing concerns. Good leaders facilitate conversation and group decision making, they don't dominate it.

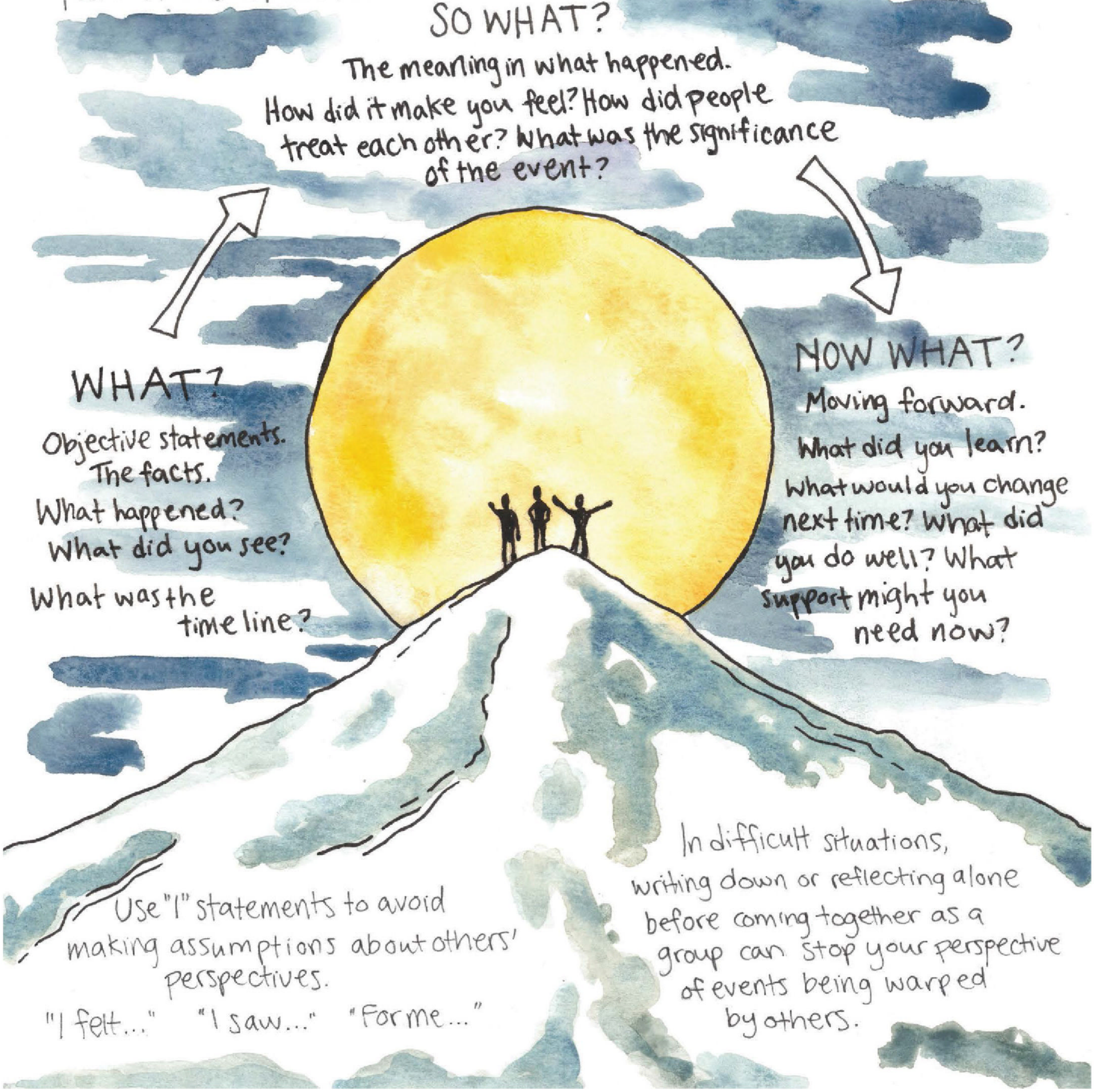
This article is part of a series on heuristic traps. There are six main heuristics that play a part in almost every outdoor incident. Knowing what they are and how to avoid them can help you stay safe. The six heuristic traps are: Familitary, Conformity, Commitment, Expert Halo, Social Proof, and Scarcity.

A SHORT LITTLE GUIDE TO

DEBRIEFING

BY RACHEL DAVIES

Processing an experience helps create meaning and understanding both personally and between those who shared it. Had a fight about getting lost? Summited a long-sought-after peak? Someone got injured? Finished a big trip? Good or bad, debriefing is an important part of the experience.



SO WHAT?

The meaning in what happened. How did it make you feel? How did people treat each other? What was the significance of the event?

WHAT?

Objective statements. The facts. What happened? What did you see? What was the time line?

NOW WHAT?

Moving forward. What did you learn? What would you change next time? What did you do well? What support might you need now?

Use "I" statements to avoid making assumptions about others' perspectives.

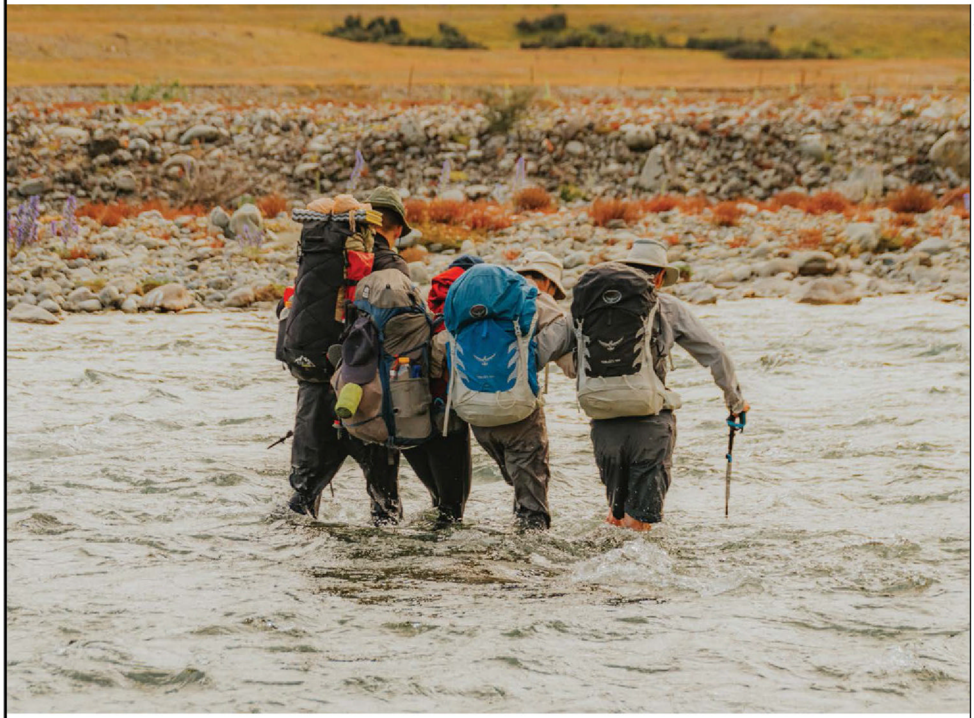
"I felt..." "I saw..." "For me..."

In difficult situations, writing down or reflecting alone before coming together as a group can stop your perspective of events being warped by others.

HOW TO CROSS A RIVER AS A GROUP

The mutual support method of crossing a river.

BY HEATHER GRADY


ALEKSANDRA AKSIUK

The mutual support method is the best technique for crossing rivers

YOU ARE AT A RIVER which you want to cross; it's been decided it's safe to cross and where to cross. But how should the crossing be done?

If there are two or more people, the mutual support method should be used. This method is much stronger than other forms of linking up; if one person lets go they are being held by one or two others. There is less movement between adjacent people compared to other linking methods so the forces acting on the link are less.

PREPARATION

- Prepare for possible immersion. You need to avoid gear getting wet or torn off, or losing your pack if you fall in. It's recommended to double-bag gear using a pack liner and then placing essential items such as electronics, clothes and sleeping bag in another dry bag.
- Remove any loose items on the outside of the pack. Also remove your hat and glasses, or put a tie around your glasses. Do up laces and gaiters. Consider your clothing, you may want to take off your coat, long trousers and/or long johns.
- Keep your boots on. It is better they get wet than you injure your feet on rocks or sharp objects.
- The pack is your life jacket. For multiple or significant crossings, pack to aid buoyancy by putting light stuff on top with sleeping mats tied on top of the pack
- Undo the chest strap and loosen the shoulder straps a little. If the pack has a quick release hip belt buckle, keep this done up. This aids stability and keeps the pack attached if you fall; it is your life jacket and has everything you need.
- Tuck in any loose clothing that could be pushed up by the current to cover the hip belt buckle. Check you can release the buckle easily if needed, even under tension.

BINDING

- Work in groups of two to six people. More people make the group stronger but more than five or six becomes unwieldy and hard to manage. The width of a suitable crossing area may limit the group size.
- Put the strongest person at the upstream end to break the flow for others.
- Each person puts their hand between the back and the pack of the person beside them and holds their hip belt or pack strap.
- The end people will each be holding one person and be held by one person. The people in the middle will each hold two people and be held by two people.

CROSSING

- Keep the group in a straight line parallel to the current to minimise water resistance.
- Don't lift your feet; take small shuffling steps; using your feet to feel the bottom.
- Watch the far bank as much as possible, this keeps your head up and makes it less likely that you'll fall forward.
- Don't clutch at logs or boulders under the water; this may unbalance you.
- To conserve energy, allow the current to take you in a slight diagonal direction downstream.

UNBINDING

- Unbinding often unbalances people, so wait until everyone is on dry land before unbinding. While it is tempting to unbind in the shallows, if you fell backwards here, it would be into the current or deeper water.
- Algae often grow in the shallows, adding to the likelihood of slipping or falling.

WHAT NEXT

The mutual support method is for a group of people using large capacity packs with frames. But what if you have day packs, no packs or you're alone? This will be discussed next month.

Heather Grady is an instructor with Outdoor Training New Zealand

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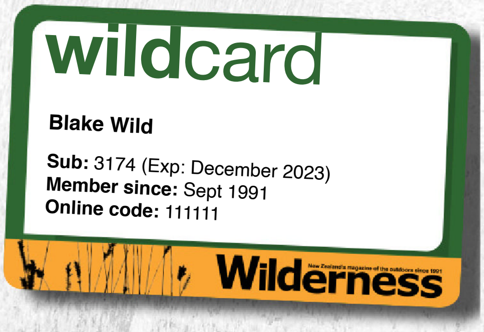

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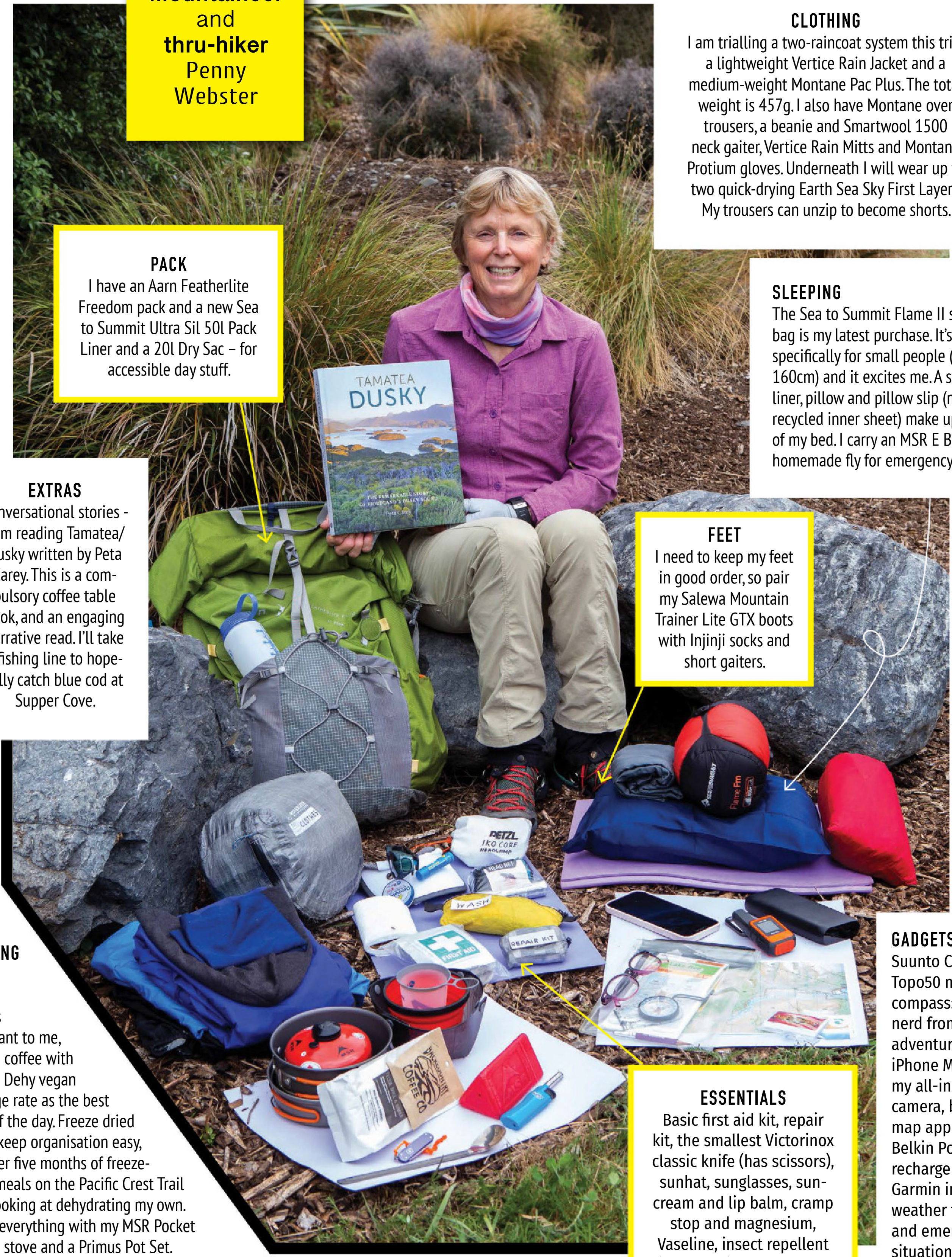
What's in MY PACK

Mountaineer and thru-hiker Penny Webster

PENNY WEBSTER IS A MOUNTAINEER, TRAMPER AND THRU-HIKER WHO COMPLETES ADVENTURES VARYING FROM EASY, TO THE EXTREME. SHE HAS HIKED THE 4200KM PACIFIC CREST TRAIL AND CLIMBED ALL NEW ZEALAND'S 3000M PEAKS.

"I select my gear according to the activity, with lightweight and key considerations. In several weeks I am walking the Dusky Track in Fiordland and am packing what you see in the photo."



CLOTHING

I am trialling a two-raincoat system this trip: a lightweight Vertice Rain Jacket and a medium-weight Montane Pac Plus. The total weight is 457g. I also have Montane over trousers, a beanie and Smartwool 1500 neck gaiter, Vertice Rain Mitts and Montane Protium gloves. Underneath I will wear up to two quick-drying Earth Sea Sky First Layers. My trousers can unzip to become shorts.

PACK

I have an Aarn Featherlite Freedom pack and a new Sea to Summit Ultra Sil 50l Pack Liner and a 20l Dry Sac – for accessible day stuff.

SLEEPING

The Sea to Summit Flame II sleeping bag is my latest purchase. It's designed specifically for small people (less than 160cm) and it excites me. A silk bag liner, pillow and pillow slip (made from recycled inner sheet) make up the rest of my bed. I carry an MSR E Bivy and a homemade fly for emergency shelter.

EXTRAS

Conversational stories - I am reading Tamatea/ Dusky written by Peta Carey. This is a compulsory coffee table book, and an engaging narrative read. I'll take a fishing line to hopefully catch blue cod at Supper Cove.

FEET

I need to keep my feet in good order, so pair my Salewa Mountain Trainer Lite GTX boots with Injinji socks and short gaiters.

COOKING AND FOOD

Food is important to me, so Drip coffee with a Local Dehy vegan porridge rate as the best meal of the day. Freeze dried meals keep organisation easy, but after five months of freeze-dried meals on the Pacific Crest Trail I am looking at dehydrating my own. I cook everything with my MSR Pocket Rocket stove and a Primus Pot Set.

ESSENTIALS

Basic first aid kit, repair kit, the smallest Victorinox classic knife (has scissors), sunhat, sunglasses, suncream and lip balm, cramp stop and magnesium, Vaseline, insect repellent (with Deet) and head net, reading glasses, toilet paper and wash kit.

GADGETS

Suunto Core watch. Topo50 map and compass: I am a map nerd from years of adventure racing. iPhone Max: this is my all-in-one gadget: camera, books and map app (Viewranger). Belkin Power Bank to recharge my devices. Garmin inReach for weather forecasts and emergency situations. Petztl Iko Core headlamp which is light and bright.

GARMIN INREACH MESSENGER

$549 (PLUS SUBSCRIPTION) / 114G

Lightweight SOS and communication device with substantial battery life

BY MARK WATSON

Features: The inReach Messenger is Garmin's latest satellite-based SOS and communications device. It enables users to call for SOS/rescue with the push of a button (as with a PLB), but also send and receive text-based communications or download a weather forecast via the Iridium satellite network. The Messenger will use cellular or WIFI networks during communications if these networks are available. It can track a users' position from every two minutes through to every four hours, with the location tracking appearing on a shareable map on Garmin's Explore website. The biggest point of difference from similar devices though is its extensive battery life. The Messenger will remain active for up to 28 days sending your location every 10 minutes. This is roughly double the battery life of an inReach Mini 2. 4/5

Display and ease of use: The Messenger is designed to be used when paired with a smartphone running Garmin's Messenger app as it has a much smaller display than its sister product, the InReach Mini 2.

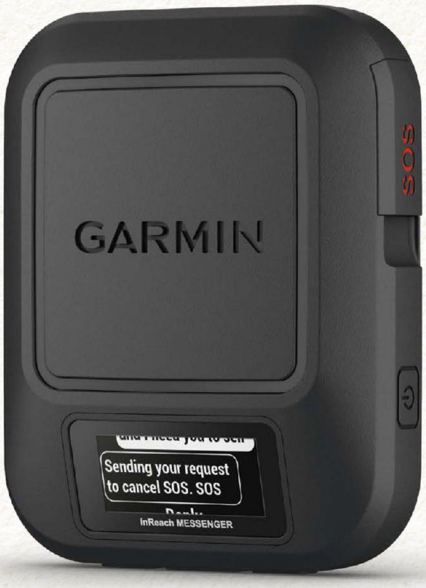
All essential functions will work without a phone, but composing messages is slow. However, messages can be read on the screen, such as weather forecasts and time and battery level checks. With the phone app, messages can be composed as would normally be done on a phone, and all of the other device functions are faster to use. Activating an SOS is as simple as flicking back a button cover and holding a button down until the alert starts, or you can activate a rescue via the app. The Messenger fits easily in the palm of your hand and has a lanyard mount, but there's no screw-in mount for attaching to a pack strap or belt, although the device works just fine sitting in the top pocket of a pack, or in a hip bag, as I have used it. 4/5

SOS and emergency use: When an SOS is activated, the Messenger makes direct contact with Garmin's emergency response centre, which then coordinates a rescue with local authorities. Like the Mini 2, the Messenger provides two-way communication with rescue services, or other contacts, as well as SOS. It doesn't use the same dedicated rescue frequency as that used by PLBs to send a homing signal, potentially making it less accurate in complex terrain. 4/5

Non-emergency communication use: From the phone app, sending a message is as simple as picking a recipient from a phone contact list and messaging the desired person via their phone number or email address, or to another inReach. With a clear sky view, messages can be sent and received very quickly, but if you're close to a cliff or in a deep valley, it can take several minutes. It's similar when downloading a weather forecast.

I've been cycling with a Messenger in South America for the past two months, with it set to track location every 10 minutes. At the last check, with the device left on and tracking constantly for the past four days, battery life was at 70 per cent. This extended battery life makes the device very useful for outdoor users who want full-time tracking on a trip for peace of mind for friends and family back home. This varies with situations as the Messenger uses more power when it does not have a clear view of the sky.

Additional features include a Trackback function, which follows your route back via the breadcrumb trail, and reverse charging, allowing a smartphone to be charged. 5/5



Global messaging and weather forecasts, extensive battery life.

Expensive, active subscription required, terrain affects messaging reliability.

VALUE: A subscription package is also required on top of the $549 price, which makes the Messenger more expensive than a regular PLB. However, that cost enables cutting-edge technology that provides communications anywhere in the world. 3/5

VERDICT: Having communication and weather forecasts while you're in the hills can greatly improve decision-making and safety, not to mention the ability to call a rescue, making the Messenger a powerful tool to have on a trip. But, if the option is available, carrying both a Messenger and PLB in the party provides the ultimate assurance.

4

2023'S *GUIDE TO* 3-4 SEASON BOOTS

Leather is still the optimal material for long term durability and comfort. Synthetic boots tend to be lighter and faster drying. Avoid uppers that have seams in high-wear areas (such as the sides of the midfoot).

BY MARK WATSON

La Sportiva Aequilibrium ST GTX
$799.95

An alpine trekking, glacier travel and mixed terrain boot with a 'Double Heel' that assists walking and downhill braking. The midsole is replaced with a carbon-loaded nylon insole and combined outsole to provide an ergonomic and precise fit. There's a Gore-Tex Comfort lining, high-tenacity abrasion resistant nylon uppers, and a Vibram outsole. 1260g (m), 1030g (w). www.mountainadventure.co.nz

Salewa Rapace GTX
$579.90

A mountain trekking boot with a hard-wearing nubuck and fabric upper and Gore-Tex protection. It features Salewa's 3F System for ankle support, flexibility and fit, a Flex Collar (for ankle mobility), a full rubber rand and a rock-gripping Vibram WTC outsole. It's stiff enough for semi-automatic crampons. 1480g (m), 1230g (w). www.bobo.co.nz

Salewa Crow GTX
$529.90

This boot is designed for mixed and general alpine terrain with an abrasion-resistant fabric upper and Gore-Tex lining. It features a crampon-compatible Vibram New Mulaz sole (offering grip on rock and in snow), Salewa's 3F System for ankle and heel support, and a Flex Collar. 1350g (m), 1040g (w). www.bobo.co.nz

ANKLE HEIGHT

The taller the cuff, the more protection there'll be for ankles and lower legs but very tall cuffs might restrict agility. Tall cuffs also add weight and increase a boot's drying time. Boots with two sets of lace hooks in the cuff are a good mid-point option.

MIDSOLE

The midsole provides the balance between footbed comfort and a stable and protective platform for the foot. For longer trips on rough terrain, firmer boots are preferred both for protection and to prevent foot fatigue. Shanks are usually nylon or fibreglass. Sandwiched between the midsole and the outsole, they provide stiffness for crampon use, edging and rugged terrain. Some boots include a 'rock plate' to protect the foot on uneven ground

LACING

Laces should be easy to adjust and flow freely through the eyelets so you can create a precise and comfortable fit. Lace locks keep the boots firm in the midfoot and heel and prevent laces from loosening.

FIT

A perfect fit takes time to determine and each brand will be slightly different. Try several models and don't determine fit until the boot is laced correctly and you're standing up. Allow a little space for foot swelling and thicker socks.

OUTSOLE

Boot soles will be a high-carbon rubber that provides a balance between firmness (for 'bite' on slippery slopes), durability, and friction (on wet rock for example). Look for a heel that will provide good braking on descents.

Dolomite Crodarossa Hi GTX

$459

A mountain approach and technical tramping boot with a suede leather upper, Gore-Tex lining, TPU Shank for torsional control and rubber protection at toe and heel. Also featured is a stretch fabric tongue, Slipknot lacing for comfort and precision (especially on uneven and rocky terrain) and a Vibram Winkler Evo outsole for stability and traction. 1166g (m), 1020g (w). www.colorado-traders.co.nz

DOLOMITE
Vibram

Dolomite Tofana GTX

$469

This is a multi-day trip boot with an oiled full grain leather upper, soft nubuck leather panels and a 360-degree rubber rand. There's a Gore-Tex lining, a microporous dual-density midsole, metal lacing hardware and a Vibram XS outsole. 1380g (m), 1230g (w). www.colorado-traders.co.nz

THE NORTH FACE

The North Face Summit Breithorn FutureLight

$500

A light, protective boot using TNF's breathable-waterproof FutureLight technology. It has a ripstop fabric upper with stretch Lycra collar, a rubber rand, toe cap and heel overlay, semi-rigid nylon fibreglass-reinforced shank and a Vibram Litebase Mont rubber outsole with a heel bail for semi-automatic crampons. 1103g (m), 920g (w). www.thenorthface.co.nz

MERRELL
Vibram

Merrell Phaserbound 2

$399

A full grain leather and suede boot with Merrell's waterproof and breathable M Select DRY membrane. There's a shock-absorbing air cushion in the heel, a medium-flex nylon shank for stability, a bellows tongue and rubber toe protection. 1320g (m/w). www.merrell.co.nz

TONGUE

This protects the top of the foot from the lacing and keeps debris out of the boot. They should be gusseted to at least three-quarter height and ideally full height for maximum protection from trail debris.

WATERPROOFING

THESE BOOTS WILL CONTAIN A WATERPROOF AND BREATHABLE LINING – GORE-TEX OR EQUIVALENT – WHICH HELPS KEEP FEET WARM AND DRY. BUT THESE BOOTS ALSO HOLD WATER AND DRYING TIME IS INCREASED.

2023'S GUIDE TO SLEEPING BAGS

Trampers are fortunate to have a huge range of sleeping bags to choose from. Use this guide to help narrow down your choices.

BY MARK WATSON

INSULATION

There are two two types of insulation:

Down: The best for weight and bulk. Most down is now treated with a water-resistant coating to maintain loft and prevent clumping when wet. Check the label to make sure the down is dry treated. Most manufacturers use down that meets the Responsible Down Standard for animal welfare.

Synthetic: A good option for prolonged damp conditions, lower budgets or where weight is less important. The bags are heavier and less compressible than down for the same warmth rating but are durable, easier to wash and they'll be warmer when wet. High-end and budget synthetic bags are available.

FILL POWER

The fill power (or loft) of a bag indicates the insulative quality of the down in the bag. Bags with high fill power numbers, e.g. 850FP, use less down to achieve the same warmth as a bag of, say, 600FP which will be heavier and less compressible. The higher the fill power, the more expensive the bag.

TEMPERATURE RATING

Ratings are approximate, however, bags in this feature have all been tested to the temperature ratings standard EN13537 or, for bags sold outside Europe, ISO 23537-1. The temperature ratings shown are:

Comfort: The temperature a user, in a relaxed posture, could expect a comfortable night's sleep.

Limit: The temperature at which a user with a curled body position is in thermal equilibrium and does not feel the cold.

Extreme: A strong sensation of cold can be expected and there is risk of hypothermia.

HOOD

The more anatomic and better fitting the hood, the warmer the bag will be when pushed to its limit. Hoods should have good loft and a neck baffle to trap warm air. Drawcords should be easy to operate in the dark.

SHAPE

Mummy bags are the warmest and lightest due to there being less 'dead space'. Bags vary in size, so it's best to try a couple to see which suits your body shape. Women-specific bags are shorter and slightly wider at the hip.

ZIPS

Zips allow ease of entry and ventilation. For maximum warmth and minimum weight, half or three quarter zips are best. A bag with a full length, two-way zip allows for greater ventilation and can sometimes be zipped to another bag.

BAFFLES

Baffles form the parcels of down and are distributed to place the insulation where it's needed most. In mid to high-end bags, baffles are separated by internal panels for greater loft. On cheaper bags, they're sometimes 'sewn through'.

FABRICS

DWR-treated ripstop nylon or polyester are the most common shell fabrics. With down now usually dry treated, lighter fabrics have made a comeback.

DRAFT TUBES

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THERM-A-REST

FEATURED BAG:
Therm-A-Rest Parsec 20°F / -6°C ($1099.99).
www.ampro.co.nz

RAB MYTHIC 600
$1699.95

An ultralight four-season bag with a highly tapered cut and chevron-shaped baffles to keep the 900FP Nikwax hydrophobic goose down in position. There is an adjustable neck baffle, a three-quarter length zip, and an angled footbox for relaxed sleeping posture. **Fill weight** 600g **Temp rating** -5°C (comfort), -12°C (limit), -32°C (extreme) **Weight** 885g. www.outfitters.net.nz

RAB MYTHIC ULTRA 360
$1499.95

This alpine and fast-packer bag has a good warmth-to-weight ratio thanks to its heat-reflective Thermo Ionic Lining combined with 900FP Nikwax hydrophobic goose down. It has a half-length zip, ergonomic internal collar and hood and angled foot box. **Fill weight** 360g **Temp rating** -2°C (comfort), -8°C (limit), -27°C (extreme) **Weight** 606g. www.outfitters.net.nz

THERMAREST

THERM-A-REST HYPERION 20°F/-6°C $1229 (REG)

This three-season bag is among the lightest in its class. It uses 900FP Nikwax hydrophobic down and thermally-efficient box baffled construction in key areas for warmth and comfort. SynergyLink Connectors can secure the bag to a mattress for comfort and thermal efficiency. **Fill weight** 360g **Temp rating** 0°C (comfort), -6°C (limit), -23°C (extreme) **Weight** 567g. www.ampro.co.nz

RAB NEUTRINO PRO 500
$1099.95

A three-season bag for fast and light mountain missions. It uses 800FP Nikwax hydrophobic goose down encased in a wind and water-resistant recycled Pertex Quantum Pro fabric. There are weight-saving chevron baffles, a three-quarter length zip, and an adjustable hood. **Fill weight** 500g **Temp rating** 0°C (comfort), -6°C (limit), -24°C (extreme) **Weight** 915g. www.outfitters.net.nz

MONT HELIUM 680
$989.50

This four-season, mummy-shaped above-the-snowline bag is Mont's warmest in the Helium Range. It uses 800FP hydrophobic treated white duck down and features dual side zippers, vertical torso baffles, a box foot, contoured hood and down-filled draft tube. **Fill weight** 680g **Temp rating** -6°C (comfort), -12°C (limit) **Weight** 1099g. www.mont.com.au

THERMAREST

THERM-A-REST PARSEC 20°F/-6°C $1099 (REG)

A bag designed for lightweight packability and use from early spring to late autumn. It's filled with 800FP Nikwax hydrophobic down and has a soft-touch 20D 100% recycled nylon shell and liner. An ergonomic toe box helps warm cold feet and SynergyLink Connectors can secure the bag to a pad for greater thermal efficiency. **Fill weight** 470g **Temp rating** 0°C (comfort), -6°C (limit), -23°C (extreme) **Weight** 805g. www.ampro.co.nz

BIG AGNES PLUTON UL 40 $949

This is a highly compressible, ultralight bag using 850FP water-resistant DownTek insulation. It has a minimalist hood with one-handed drawcord, a full-length zipper that can be opened up for quilt use and an ergonomic footbox. **Fill weight** 227g **Temp rating** 4° **Weight** 454g. www.gearshop.co.nz

RAB ASCENT PRO 800 $899.95

A generous-fit winter bag with 650FP Nikwax hydrophobic duck-down and a wind and water-resistant Pertex Quantum Pro outer. It will cope with wind, condensation and damp conditions. **Fill weight** 800g **Temp rating** -15°C **Weight** 1430g (m), 1350g (w). www.outfitters.net.nz

BIG AGNES STAR FIRE UL $879.99

This is Big Agnes's most compressible technical bag. It's filled with 850FP DownTek water-repellent down and has a Pertex shell. There's body-mapped baffle construction, an anti-snag draft tube, contoured hood and ergonomic footbox. **Fill weight** 284g **Temp rating** -1° **Weight** 652g. www.gearshop.co.nz

RAB ALPINE 600 $799.95

A tapered three-season alpine and tramping bag with 650FP Nikwax hydrophobic duck-down fill. There's a wind-resistant Pertex Quantum outer, chevron baffle design for down stability and even distribution, a three-quarter length zip, down-filled neck collar and angled footbox. **Fill weight** 600g **Temp rating** -5°C (comfort), -12°C (limit), -32°C (extreme) **Weight** 1050g (m), 1000g (w). www.outfitters.net.nz

BIG AGNES TORCHLIGHT UL $829.99

A mummy bag with two expandable panels from shoulder to footbox that add an extra 25cm to the sleep space and allow for a customised fit. It uses 850FP water-repellent DownTek insulation, there's a jacket-style hood, thermally efficient body-mapped baffles, and a vaulted footbox. **Fill weight** 312g **Temp rating** -1° **Weight** 794g. www.gearshop.co.nz

THERM-A-REST QUESTAR 32°F/0°C $799.99 (REG)

This is the lightest bag in the Questar range. It uses 650FP Nikwax hydrophobic down that is claimed to stay drier and maintain loft 60 times longer than untreated down. It has zoned insulation, which saves weight and maximises warmth. There's a heat-trapping draft collar, full-length zipper draft tube, snag-free zipper and cinchable hood. **Fill weight** 400g **Temp rating** 5°C (comfort), 0°C (limit), -15°C (extreme). **Weight** 849g. www.ampro.co.nz

THE NORTH FACE BLUE KAZOO ECO $750

A water-repellent bag made with recycled materials and repurposed 700FP goose down insulation. It has trapezoidal side-chamber baffles,, and the hood is fully insulated with a cinch collar. There's a two-thirds length side zipper and mattress attachments. **Fill weight** N/A **Temp rating** 0°C (comfort), -6°C (limit), -24°C (extreme) **Weight** 800g. www.thenorthface.co.nz

MONT HELIUM 450 $749.95

A lightweight 3-4 season bag suitable at sub-alpine levels. It uses 800FP hydrophobic treated white duck down and features dual side zippers, 10D nylon fabric, down-filled draft tube, contoured hood and box-walled baffles. **Fill weight** 450g **Temp rating** -1°C (comfort), -7°C (limit) **Weight** 850g (m), 835g (w). www.mont.com.au

MARMOT SAWTOOTH $699

A cold-season bag with fluffy 650FP duck down treated with hydrophobic Down Defender. It has a footbox zipper for ventilation and dual side zips with extended flaps for cold-night coverage. It's made from recycled fabrics. **Fill weight** 700g **Temp rating** -3°C (comfort), -9°C (limit), -28°C (extreme) **Weight** 1310g. www.marmotnz.co.nz

EXPED TREKKINGLITE -10C FROM $649.99

This 700FP European duck down bag offers excellent warmth-to-weight and a minimal packed size for spring through winter trips. It's a bag for warmer sleepers, with cold sleepers finding it more suitable for spring and summer. It has a proportional differential cut, multi-chambered footbox and a plush adjustable draft collar, all contributing to its warmth rating. **Fill weight** 770g **Temp rating** -5°C (comfort), -11°C (limit), -32°C (extreme) **Weight** 1290g. www.bivouac.co.nz

MONT ZERO SUPERLIGHT $629.95

An ultralight 2-3 season bag with 1000FP goose down that is appropriate for temperatures to around 2°C for a warm sleeper. Features include vertical baffles for down distribution on the torso, a contoured hood, 7D mini-ripstop downproof nylon fabric, half side zip and hydrophobic thread (prevents moisture wicking into the bag). **Fill weight** 230g **Temp rating** 8°C (comfort), 2°C (limit) **Weight** 417g. www.mont.com.au

NEMO RIFF 15 $599.95

This is a spoon-shaped bag with extra room at the elbows and knees to better accommodate side sleepers. It uses 800FP hydrophobic down and has two zippered chest vents to help regulate temperature during the night. There's a 'Blanket Fold' external draft collar, and a full-length zip enabling men's and women's bags to be zipped together. **Fill weight** 540g **Temp rating** -2°C (comfort), -9°C (limit) **Weight** 1080g (m), 1330g (w). www.mountainadventure.co.nz

BIG AGNES FUSSELL UL DOWNTEK QUILT $579.99

A three-season quilt for hut trips and thru-hikes, or to pair with another bag for additional warmth. It uses 850FP DownTek insulation and is designed to be tucked around the user. 10 snap patches create a simplified mummy bag on cold nights or allow the quilt to be fixed to a sleeping mat. **Fill weight** 255g **Temp rating** N/A **Weight** 582g. www.gearshop.co.nz

MARMOT WOMEN'S ANGEL FIRE $549

A women-specific, shoulder season, bag with 650FP duck down treated with hydrophobic Down Defender. It has a footbox zipper for ventilation and dual side zips with extended zipper flaps for cold-night coverage. It's made from recycled fabrics. **Fill weight**: 710g **Temp rating** -3°C (comfort), -9°C (limit), -28°C (extreme) **Weight** 1270g. www.marmotnz.co.nz

SIERRA DESIGNS NITRO QUILT 20 $549

This is one part blanket, one part sleeping bag and is designed for those looking to cut pack weight or who feel restricted by mummy bags. It has an oversized fit and overall larger size for greater coverage, and uses water-resistant 800FP DriDown. There are full-length insulated hand/arm pockets and a hideaway hood to contain warmth on cold nights. **Fill weight** 420g **Temp rating** 0° (comfort), -6° (limit) **Weight** 760g. www.furtherfaster.co.nz

EXPED LITE +1 FROM $499.99

This is a lightweight bag with velvety soft inner and outer fabrics. It is also watertight and has an 800FP European goose down fill, a radical differential cut to prevent elbows and knees compressing the down, heat-retention comfort hood, mattress loops and 3D footbox. **Fill weight** 310g **Temp rating** 6°C (comfort), 0°C (limit), -16°C (extreme) **Weight** 780g. www.bivouac.co.nz

SIERRA DESIGNS CLOUD 20 WOMEN'S $499

A zipperless sleeping bag with unrestricted freedom for any sleeping position. It's shaped for women (there's a men's version, too) and uses water-resistant 800FP DriDown and warmth features like an adjustable self-sealing foot vent, insulated shoulder pockets and a sleeping pad sleeve. **Fill weight** 580g **Temp rating** -6° (comfort), -13° (limit) **Weight** 1030g. www.furtherfaster.co.nz

MARMOT TRESTLES ELITE ECO 20 $349.95

Marmot says this is its most sustainable sleeping bag. It features Marmot Upcycle PFC-free and recycled shell, lining and fill. The synthetic insulation blends three fibres for warmth, softness and high loft. There's wave construction on top for loft and warmth, and blanket construction on the bottom for comfort. **Fill weight** 710g **Temp rating** 0.1°C (comfort), -5.8 °C (limit), -23.2°C (extreme) **Weight** 1292g (m), 1214g (w). www.marmotnz.co.nz

MARMOT TRESTLES ELITE ECO 30 $299.95

This mummy-style bag is made from 96% recycled material and its synthetic insulation blends three fibres for warmth, softness and high loft. There's wave construction on top for loft and warmth, and blanket construction on the bottom for comfort. **Fill weight** 490g **Temp rating** 3.1°C (comfort), -2.2 °C (limit), -18.5°C (extreme) **Weight** 490g (m), 775g (w). www.marmotnz.co.nz

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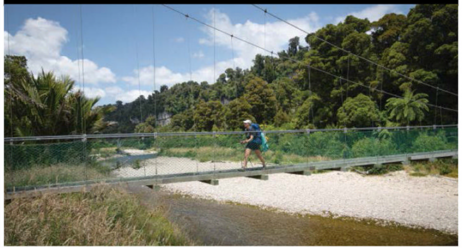

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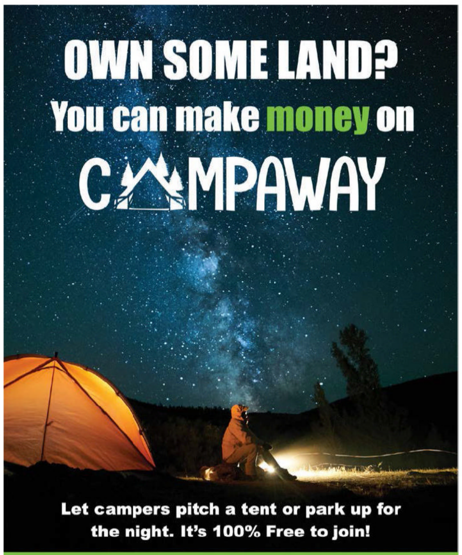
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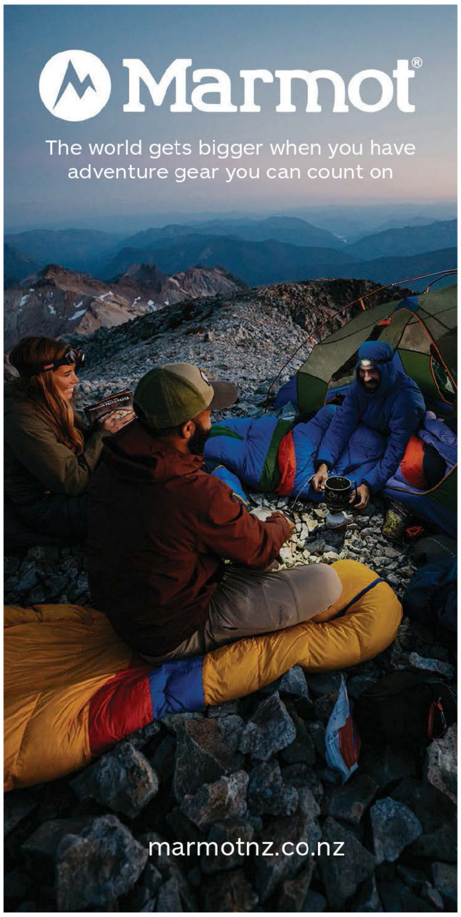

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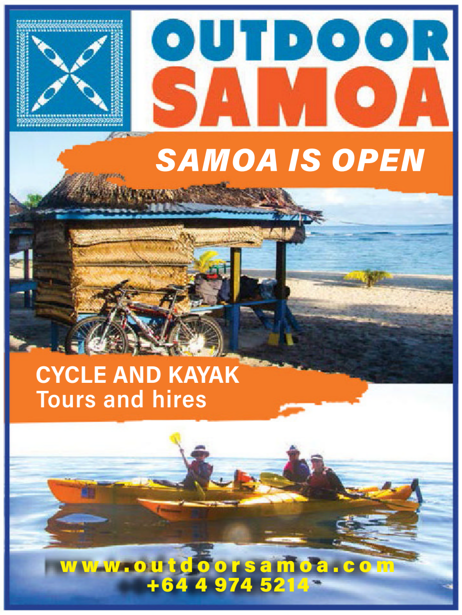
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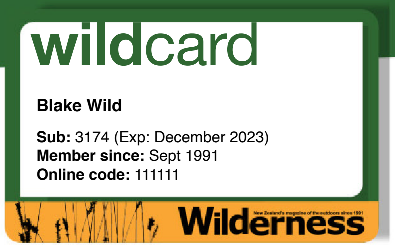

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Suze Kelly on a recent acclimatisation hike to Nepal, with Ama Dablam (6812 m) behind

BACK TO *THE MOUNTAINS*

Suze Kelly has been general manager of internationally-renowned Wānaka-based mountain guiding company Adventure Consultants for over 25 years, but the last three of these have brought extra challenges. She describes the new world of adventure tourism in our pandemic age.

BY ALISTAIR HUGHES

How did the pandemic affect your business?

Prior to Covid closing the borders in 2020, we had been operating around 30 expeditions a year, plus individual trips in New Zealand and the European alps. We were able to carry on for some time with the support from the government and could operate on a limited basis by following all the health guidelines, but eventually we decided to put AC into hibernation in 2021 and 2022. And that proved a successful strategy, in order to survive and to reinvigorate the company.

And, transitioning out of that hibernation?

We were in constant contact with clients all over the world and tried to keep them informed. Deposits and payments were refunded or offered as credits on future trips. Gradually we were able to commit to opening again, bringing staff back, and being able to actually operate some trips. We now work from our home offices and that's a shift in mindset that suits our industry quite well. This has always been a 24/7 type of business.

Are there any regrets about not restarting earlier?

The strategy we chose was definitely correct for us. Our team in Nepal were not confident about operating earlier because, although vaccination rates were building, there was still a lot of Covid around. A separate incident in 2021 during an outbreak was really hard to watch from afar, when some westerners returned home, the locals who were infected went back to their villages and Covid spread.

Even in 2022 it wasn't straightforward for travel, but certainly the timing felt right. We have well-developed systems and have been operating for so long that a lot of clients are repeat customers.

Adventure Consultants owner Guy Cotter has said the guiding industry would be decimated by the pandemic, because guides would move into other industries. Has this happened?

It has occurred to a degree in some areas. A lot of upcoming New Zealand guides elected to not continue training and took up other careers. I can definitely say there's only a limited number of New Zealand guides now available. Our response has been to not run as many trips as we used to. Although we're well known internationally, our approach has always been boutique with small teams.
We focus on training and providing quality logistics.We were never an organisation that pumps out experiences conveyor belt style.
Our adventures are more curated, so this development sits well with our philosophy.

A LOT OF UPCOMING NEW ZEALAND GUIDES ELECTED TO NOT CONTINUE TRAINING AND TOOK UP OTHER CAREERS.

What has changed in the industry for the better or worse?

Honestly, I can't think of any changes that are negative. On our return to Nepal we saw many improvements. The trails have been upgraded, work has been done on a lot of the lodges and accommodations, and people have been educating themselves with more languages. There's been much thought given to moving forward sustainably, in terms of our resourcing, travelling and freighting. We feel confident and happy to be back doing what we love, with a level of adaptability and flexibility to ensure that we continue delivering great experiences for people. This is definitely a positive industry to be involved in.

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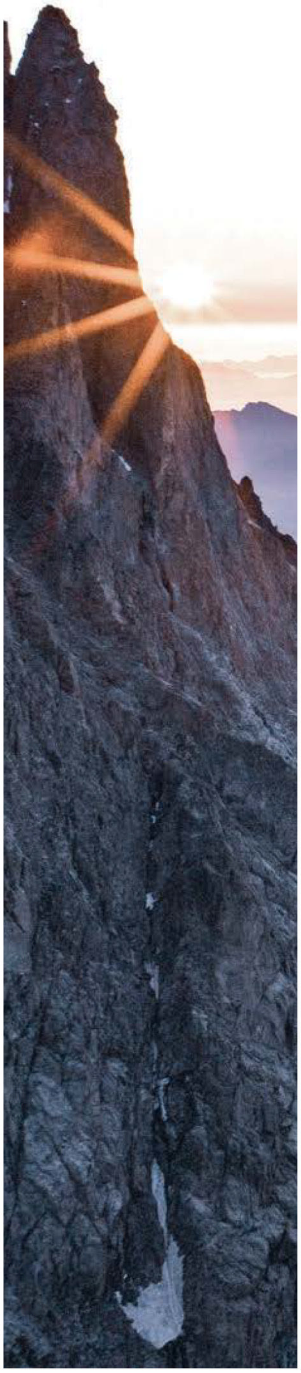

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